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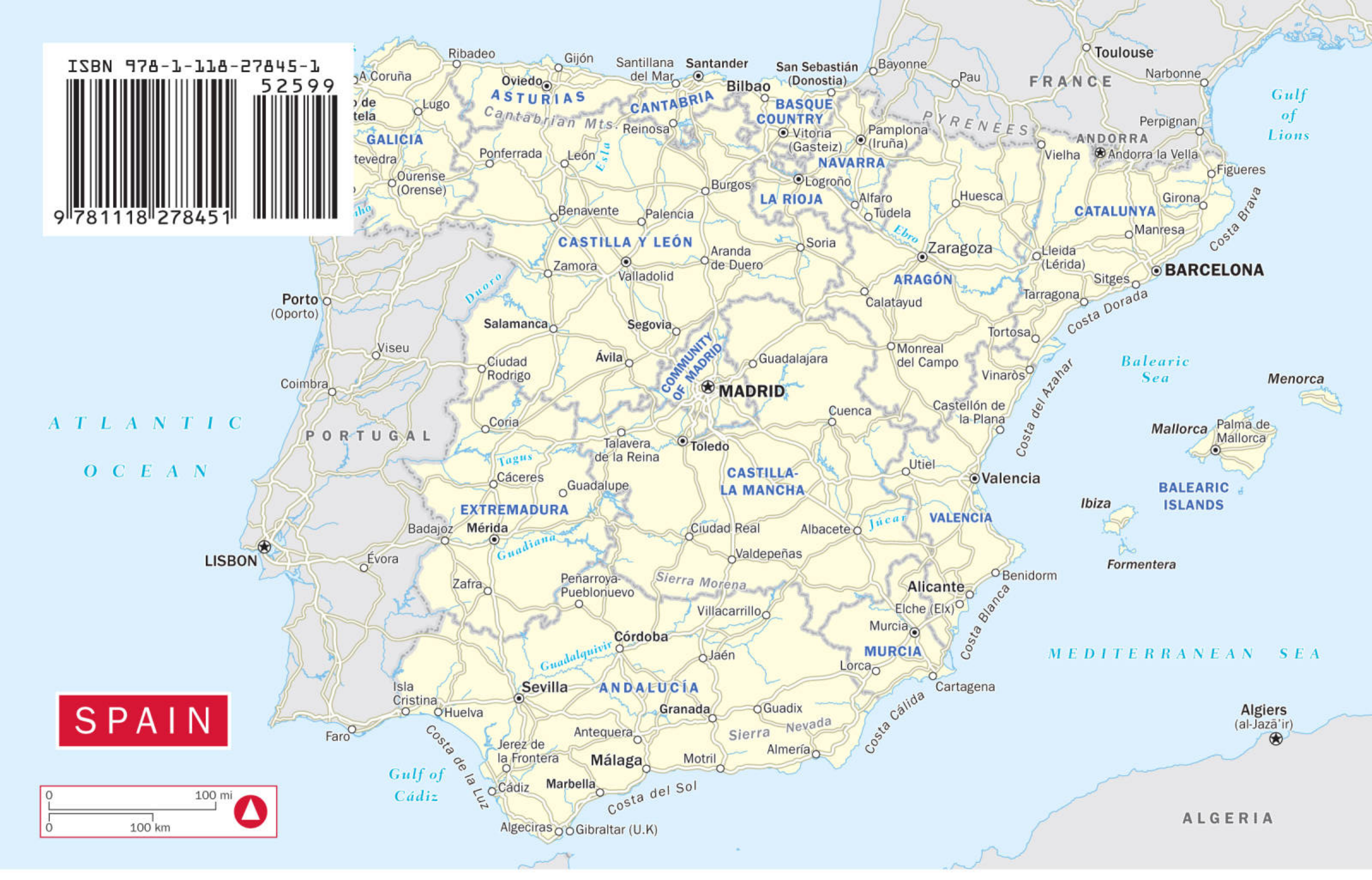
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Calatayud
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Salamanca
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Tortosa
Viseu
Ciudad Rodrigo
Ávila
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Vinaròs
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Frommer's®

Spain

19th Edition

by Patricia Harris & David Lyon

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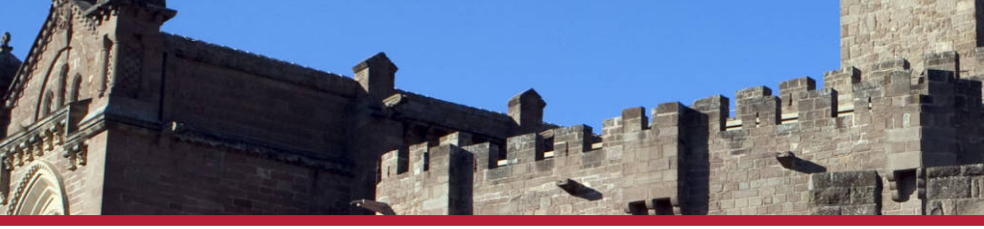

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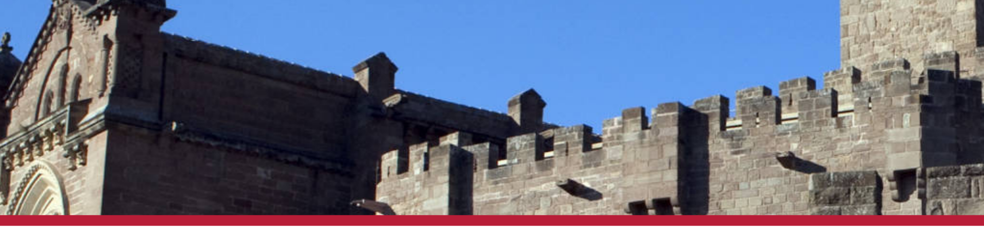

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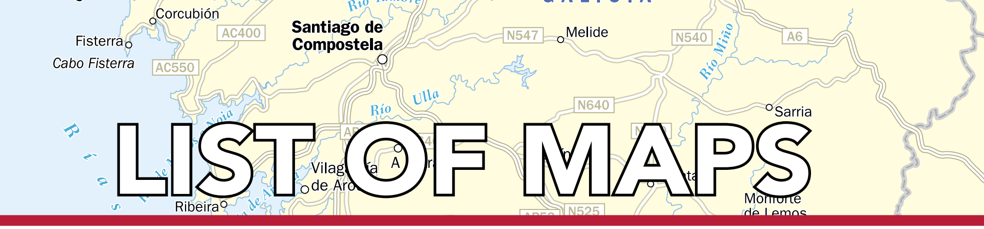
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patricia Harris and **David Lyon** have journeyed the world for American, British, Swiss, and Asian publishers to write about food, culture, art, and design. They have covered subjects as diverse as elk migrations in western Canada, the street markets of Shanghai, winter hiking on the Jungfrau, and the origins of Mesoamerican civilization in the Mexican tropics. In the name of research, they have eaten hot-pepper-toasted grasshoppers, English beef, and roasted armadillo in banana sauce. When good wine or craft beer is unavailable, they drink Diet Coke. Wherever they go, they are continually drawn back to Spain for the flamenco nightlife, the Moorish architecture of Andalucía, the world-weary and lust-ridden saints of Zurbarán, and the phantasmagoric visions of El Greco—and the sheer joy of conversing with the regulars in a thousand little bars while drinking the house wine and eating tapas of Manchego and chorizo. They are the coauthors of *Frommer's Spain Day by Day* and *Pauline Frommer's Spain.*

HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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Travel information can change quickly and unexpectedly, and we strongly advise you to confirm important details locally before traveling, including information on visas, health and safety, traffic and transport, accommodations, shopping, and eating out. We also encourage you to stay alert while traveling and to remain aware of your surroundings. Avoid civil disturbances, and keep a close eye on cameras, purses, wallets, and other valuables.

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FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

🎁 **special finds**—those places only insiders know about

💬 **fun facts**—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun

☺ **kids**—best bets for kids and advice for the whole family

📷 **special moments**—those experiences that memories are made of

✋ **overrated**—places or experiences not worth your time or money

📎 **insider tips**—great ways to save time and money

🏷 **great values**—where to get the best deals

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express	**DISC**	Discover	**V**	Visa
DC	Diners Club	**MC**	MasterCard		

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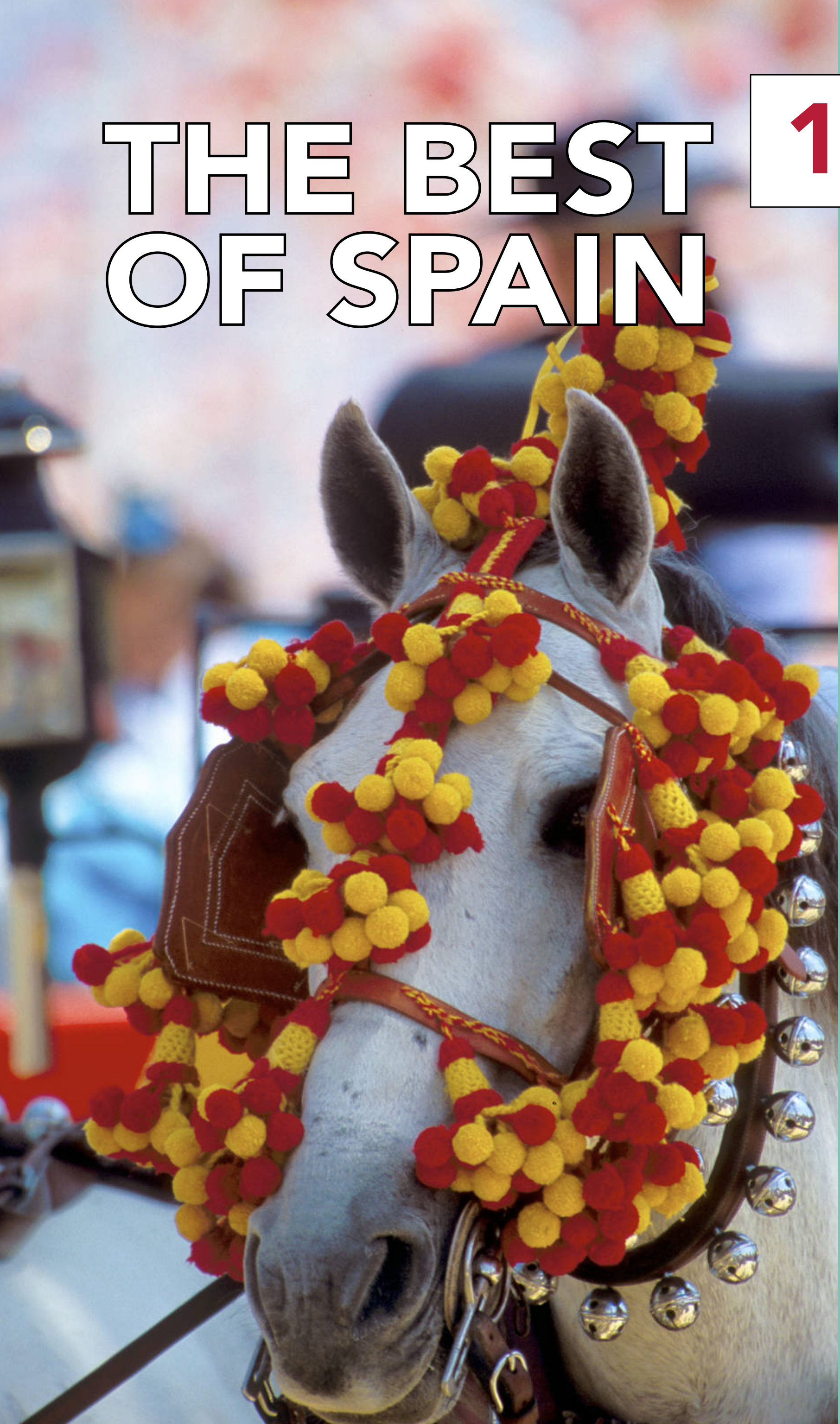
Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com**, has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best airfare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guidebook editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

1

THE BEST OF SPAIN



We agree with the sentiment apocryphally attributed to Ernest Hemingway: "If you visit only one foreign country in your lifetime, make it Spain." Nowhere else is quite as rich, or quite as demanding. When you go to Spain, you must surrender to Spain.

You must accept the rhythms of daily life—so unlike the rest of Europe—and think nothing of going to dinner after 10pm and then closing down the flamenco bar after the 3am final set. You must spend the evening in a seafront promenade, walking and talking and nodding at the other walkers and talkers. You must not be bashful about elbowing your way to the bar, pointing at the tapas to order, and having your fill. For that matter, you must resolve to eat something new every day that you would otherwise turn your nose up at: blood sausage, goose barnacles, pig's trotters. Outside the cities, shops and museums close in the heat of the afternoon, and you must be patient and while away the hours with lunch in a cool, shady courtyard. Do all that, and you will be ready for everything Spain throws at you.

There is a Spain for every taste. The country stretches from long, sandy beaches on three coasts to mountain ranges that rise into the clouds. While there's truth to the image of Don Quixote riding across the dry plains of central Spain, the Celtic and Basque lands of the north seem like another world: the sheer cliffs, verdant valleys, and rocky coasts of Green Spain. If ever a European country begged to be toured, it's Spain.

The small towns and villages of every region will beguile you, just as the hip modern European metropolises of Barcelona and Madrid will make your pulse

ABOVE: **The gardens of the Alhambra and Generalife in Granada.** PREVIOUS PAGE: **A horse dressed for Feria del Caballo in Jerez.**

race. The Moorish legacy of Andalucía will have you in its thrall. With architecture that ranges from Roman aqueducts to Moorish palaces to Gaudí's phantasmagorical basilica to Frank O. Gehry's armored fish of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, and art that progresses from cave paintings to Picasso, Spain will dazzle your eyes. Its classical music and its flamenco will dazzle your ears. And everywhere you go, its great chefs will dazzle your taste buds. To get you started, here are some of the highlights.

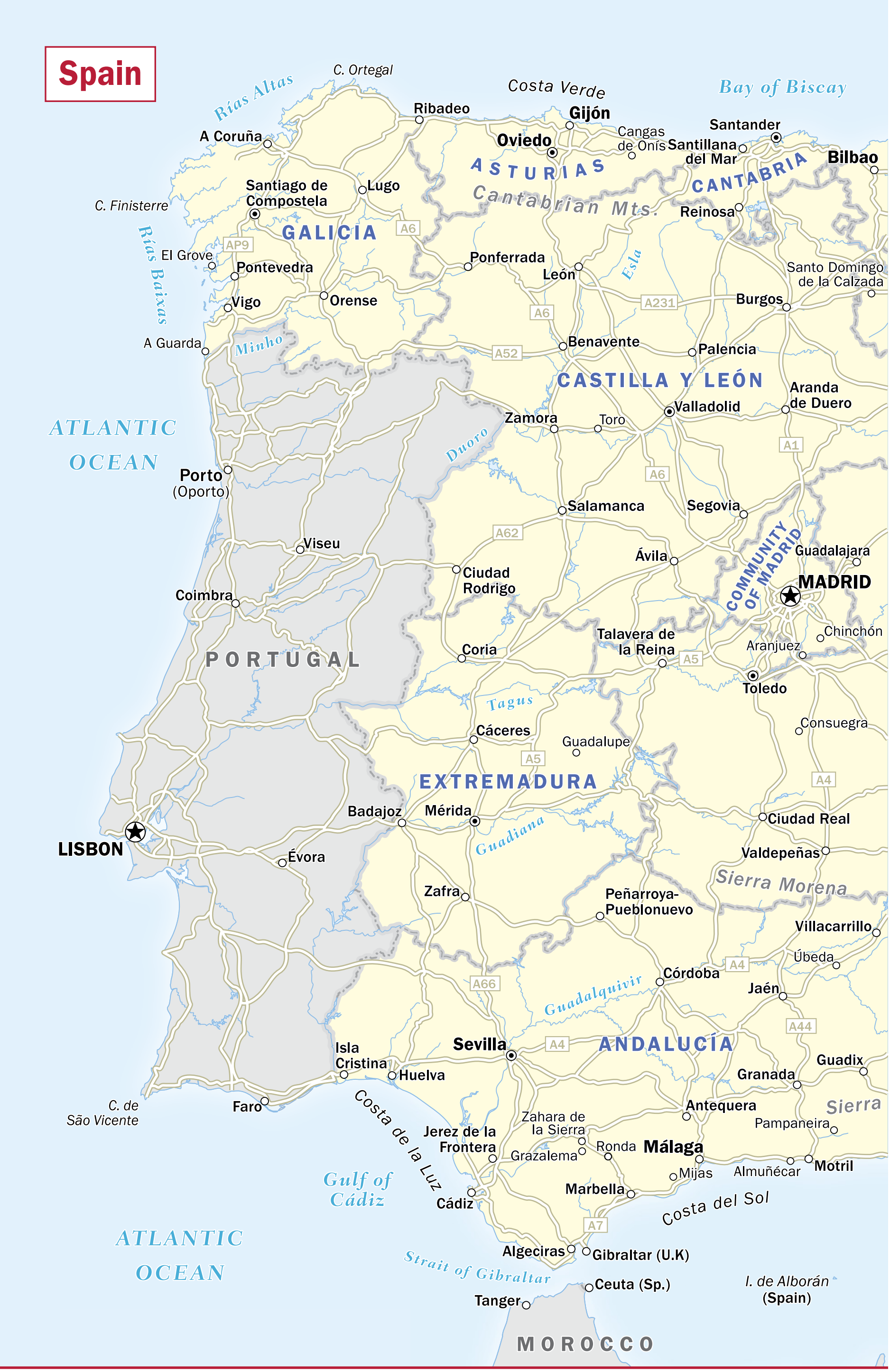
THE most UNFORGETTABLE SPANISH EXPERIENCES

- **Getting Caught Up in the Passions of Flamenco in Sevilla:** Whether you watch an artful performance at the flamenco dance museum or join the rowdier crowd in a Gypsy bar in Triana, you'll find yourself walking down the street to a syncopated beat. See p. 264.
- **Visiting with Spain's Great Artists in Madrid's Museo del Prado:** From Velázquez, Zurbarán, and El Greco to Goya, Spanish painting has been a conversation among geniuses across the ages. Eavesdrop at the Prado, where you could spend hours in a single gallery. See p. 87.
- **Seeing the Homes of Moorish Royalty and Commoners in Granada:** The Alhambra palace was the crowning artistic glory of Islamic Spain. Once you've seen how the royals lived, wander the medieval warren of the Albaicín. See p. 298.
- **Joining a Tapas-Crawl Around Madrid's Plaza Santa Ana:** Whole legs of air-dried *jamón serrano* (mountain ham) hang over every bar. Try it as you eat your way around Spain in a thousand bites of smoked trout, anchovies, fried potatoes with *bravas* sauce, or nuggets of sausage. See p. 112.
- **Gaping at the Gaudís in Barcelona:** The Catálan language has the perfect verb to describe seeing the *modernisme* buildings of Antoní Gaudí, including his Sagrada Familia basilica and La Pedrera apartment building. *Badar* means "to walk around with your mouth open in amazement." See p. 430.

Sampling tapas in Madrid.

Gaudí's Casà Mila, also known as La Pedrera.

Spain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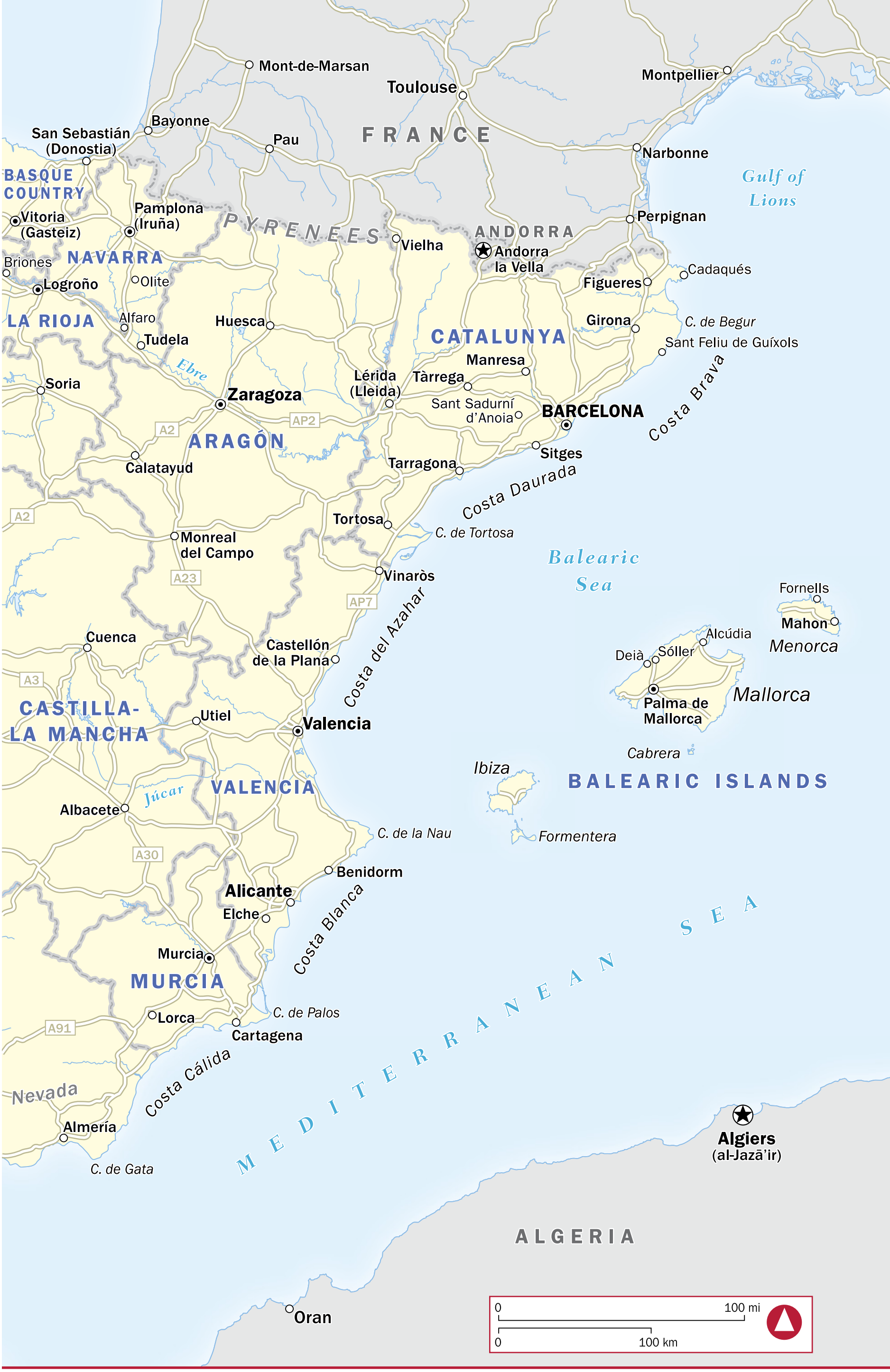
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100 km

The cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

- **Celebrating the Basque Renaissance in Bilbao:** The bold architecture of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum set a new bar for design and sparked a chain of civic improvements. Between the new waterfront promenade and the architecture that aspires to Gehry's achievement, Bilbao struts its stuff with pride. See p. 594.
- **Getting Down with Caesar Augustus:** It took Rome 200 years to subjugate Spain after the first invasion in 218 B.C., but once the Romans landed, they built like mad. The greatest of the Roman ruins (rivaling those in Rome) lie in Tarragona, the eastern capital of Hispania, and Mérida, the western capital. See p. 512 and 239.
- **Admiring the Faith of Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela:** For nearly 10 centuries, Christian pilgrims have trekked across northern Spain to the holy shrine of St. James, or Santiago. For the devout, walking into the great cathedral is an earthly taste of the gates of paradise. See p. 672.

THE best CITY & REGIONAL EXPERIENCES

- **Driving the White Towns of the Sierra de Grazalema:** From Ronda to Arcos de la Frontera, the ancient mountain villages cling to their hilltops like a flock of nesting white birds. At the top of every town stands a medieval church built over a mosque built over a Roman temple. See p. 332.
- **Rambling the Judería of Córdoba:** Once you've seen La Mezquita, the greatest surviving medieval mosque in Europe, wander the network of narrow, shaded streets so ancient that centuries of whitewash have rounded every sharp corner of the walls. See p. 277.

Córdoba's La Mezquita.

- **Sampling the Future at the City of Arts and Sciences:** Few places on the planet feel as futuristic as the grand-scale buildings and plazas of Valencia's museum park. One of the buildings even winks its giant eye at you. See p. 405.
- **Surveying the Ages in Girona:** From Roman fortifications to Muslim palaces to the largest Jewish Call in Spain, Girona holds fast to its past. The ramparts above the cathedral show the whole ancient city, raised like dinosaur plates on the spine of a hill. See p. 530.
- **Visiting the Tough Guys in Cáceres:** The name Cáceres comes from the Arabic for "fortified citadel," and even within the ancient walls, medieval nobles built their palaces to withstand quarrels with their neighbors. No wonder Cáceres supplied so many soldiers to conquer the New World. See p. 234.
- **Seeing Rainbows While Crossing the Picos de Europa:** The abrupt limestone mountains of the Picos de Europa trap moisture flowing off the Atlantic into northern Spain. From the high mountain passes, rainbows arc across the lowlands below. See p. 647.

THE best FOOD & DRINK EXPERIENCES

- **Nibbling Shrimp and Sipping Sherry in Sanlúcar de Barrameda:** From tiny shrimp to whomping prawns, the Bahía de Cádiz off Sanlúcar has an amazing variety of sweet shrimp. Grilled, steamed, roasted, or stewed, they are perfect with a glass of the village's manzanilla sherry. See p. 336.
- **Savouring Roast Suckling Pig in Segovia:** From the moment the waiter literally smashes the piglet on the table to the last surreptitious lick of your fingers,

devouring a roast suckling pig in Segovia is a ceremony in itself. There's even an association that certifies chefs in the proper technique. See p. 173.

- **Digging into an Outdoor Paella at L'Albufera:** The wetlands just south of Valencia mark the spot where North Africans introduced rice into Spain in the 8th century. No paella is finer than those made with heritage rice over an outdoor charcoal fire in any of the villages surrounding L'Albufera. See p. 397.

Suckling pig roasting in a tile oven.

- **Popping the Cork in Barcelona:** Spanish bars are festive, but none can match the giddy atmosphere of Barcelona's *xampanyerías*, where the sparkling cavas of the nearby Penedès flow freely. These establishments range from garagelike taverns with cheap pink bubbly to elegant *modernisme* bars. See p. 489.
- **Feasting on Contemporary Basque Cuisine in San Sebastián:** To hear them tell it, the Basques practically invented food. After you've had a few meals in San Sebastián—at a humble dockside dive or a Michelin-starred gastronomic temple—you might give the claim some credence. See p. 605.
- **Enjoying a Glass at the City of Wine in the Heart of the Rioja:** Spaniards consider wine a high art, so it's no surprise that the Marqués de Riscal hired Guggenheim architect Frank Gehry to create the City of Wine. Enjoy a copa or two in the visitor center. See p. 589.

Wines of Marqués de Riscal.

- **Snacking on Spain's Best Charcuterie:** Sausage is dear to the Spanish heart, and no place in Spain makes more intense chorizo and other *embutidos* than León. And that's only the beginning, for León makes smoked and air-dried beef called *cecina* that rivals the best serrano hams.

THE best WAYS TO SEE SPAIN LIKE A LOCAL

- **Shop in the Fresh Food Markets of Barcelona and Valencia:** One look at the culinary riches on display in Barcelona's La Boquería and Valencia's Mercado Central, and you'll grasp the Spanish obsession with eating. Wait till you taste that orange! See p. 476 and 411.
- **Watch a Corrida at Madrid's Las Ventas:** Detractors deride the bullfight as barbaric, and Catalunya has banned it. But the ancient ritual of death in the afternoon is part of what it means to be Spanish. Watch a bullfight at this greatest of rings and decide for yourself. See p. 93.
- **Crowd into a Bar to Root for Real Madrid:** With ticket prices for Real Madrid football (soccer) matches as expensive as any professional American sport, most fans watch the matches on television—ideally on a *huge* screen in a bar. See p. 129.
- **Bargain with Vendors at El Rastro:** The venerable Sunday street market in Madrid's Lavapies district is awash with bargains, but shopping seems like even more fun when you can haggle with the vendors to get a lower price on that pashmina shawl, those silver earrings, or a leather purse. See p. 118.
- **Dance the Sardana in Barcelona:** Every Sunday, people gather outside the cathedral in Barcelona for the circular folk dance known as the *sardana*. The steps are easy, and anyone is welcome. Just join hands and dance. See p. 443.
- **Visit the Private Patios of Córdoba:** During the Córdoba Patio Festival in May, people open their homes so visitors can admire the flowers they grow in their interior courtyards. See p. 278.
- **Make the Evening Promenade in Marbella:** All over Spain, people go out for a leisurely evening walk to show off a beau, visit with neighbors, or just enjoy the cool air. The marble sidewalks of Marbella are an elegant setting for a stroll. See p. 364.

A flowering patio of Córdoba.

THE best FAMILY EXPERIENCES

- **Talking to the Animals at the Fuengirola Zoo:** Moats and landscape features substitute for bars and cages at this model zoo where you can see more than 140 species of animals native to three different ecosystems. See p. 374.
- **Seeing the Horses Dance in Jerez de la Frontera:** Elegant Hispano-Arab horses go through their paces every Thursday at the Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre (Andalucían School of Equestrian Art) in Jerez. They rear back and dance as part of the weekly show. See p. 339.
- **Walking on the Walls of Ávila:** The 11th-century walls around Ávila are some of the most intact medieval walls in Europe. Walking the ramparts gives stirring views of the countryside and puts you and the kids eye to eye with storks nesting on the city's highest buildings. See p. 179.
- **Hiking the Wind-Sculpted Hoodoos of El Torcal:** Andalucía's first natural park is a fantasia of wind-sculpted limestone boulders. Three trails let the family explore the surreal landscape without fear of getting lost. See p. 390.
- **Taking the Tykes to Madrid's Parque del Retiro:** Madrid's families flock to the Parque del Retiro on Sundays to row around the lake in boats, catch impromptu concerts, and let the little ones watch old-fashioned puppet shows. See p. 85.
- **Go Boating on the Largest Underground Lake on Mallorca:** The Cuevas del Drach (Caves of the Dragon) have concerts amid their forests of stalagmites and stalactites. Row around Lago Martel, the largest cavern lake in the world, in illuminated rowboats. See p. 720.
- **Riding the Train to the Beach in Alicante:** Hop the local light rail in downtown Alicante and arrive minutes later at the long sands of the barrier beach known as Playa San Juan (or Platja Sant Joan, in Valenciano). See p. 420.

The Cuevas del Drach.

THE best ART EXPERIENCES

- **Contemplating the Horrors of War in Front of Guernica:** Pablo Picasso's *cri de coeur* for the bombing of the defenseless Basque village of Gernika hangs in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. It remains the definitive modern artistic statement against warfare. See p. 90.
- **Communing with Zurbarán's Monks in Sevilla:** Francisco de Zurbarán captured the suffering, the boredom, the piety, and the madness of the monks he painted. The best of the portraits are in Gallery X in Sevilla's Museo de Bellas Artes. See p. 255.
- **Smiling with Miró in Barcelona:** More than 10,000 works by Joan Miró fill the Fundació Joan Miró, the light-filled museum atop Montjuïc in Barcelona. His surreal shapes and dreamy spaces have a whimsy of their own, like someone telling a funny story in another language. See p. 450.
- **Marveling at Paintings Deep in the Cantabrian Caves:** Whether they were painted 10,000 or 30,000 years ago, the delicate deer and hunched buffalo on the walls of Cantabria's limestone caves remain fresh and vibrant today. See p. 646.
- **Admiring Dalí's Theatricality in Figueres:** Salvador Dalí cultivated his image as an eccentric, so it's no surprise that his final monument to himself is a former theater transformed into a nonstop sequence of visual jokes. Here it rains *inside* the car. See p. 547.
- **Weighing Picasso's Achievement in Málaga:** The Museo Picasso in the city where the artist was born surveys Picasso's entire career with the art he saved for family or for himself. It is fitting that the artistic giant served as his own curator. See p. 384.

The Teatre-Museu Dalí in Figueres.

- **Seeing El Greco's Heavens Open in Toledo:** Better known as El Greco, Domenikos Theotokopoulos was a mystic whose perspectives are often from an angel's point of view. See those paintings and his visions of the Assumption in Toledo's Museo del Greco. See p. 155.

THE best OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

- **Hiking the Alpujarra de Granada:** Ancient Moorish mountain villages southeast of Granada make for nearly ideal town-to-town hiking on exposed rocky trails. Good starter hikes begin in the outdoors outfitting center of

A surfer tackles the barrel curl in Mundaka.

Pampaneira. Guided hikes also can be arranged at the information center of the Parque Natural de Sierra Nevada. See p. 318.

- **Cycling to L'Albufera:** The marshlands south of Valencia's port are best explored on two wheels, and there's even a bike path much of the way. See the rice farmers toiling in the marshes, enjoy the almost deserted beaches, and stop for a great paella. See p. 417.
- **Surfing the Break in Mundaka:** The long rolling barrel curl in Mundaka on the Basque Coast is famous with surfers all over the world. It's also one of the most reliable surfing breaks in Europe. Plan on wearing a wetsuit; the Bay of Biscay can be frigid. See p. 617.
- **Exploring Parque Doñana by Boat:** One of the most important refuges for migrating seabirds, the Doñana marshes form part of the delta of the Río Guadalquivír as it reaches the Baie de Cádiz. Naturalist-led boat tours leave daily from Sanlúcar de Barrameda. See p. 343.
- **Walking the Fuente Dé Ridge in the Picos de Europa:** You'll have to drive to the téleférico (cable car) station to ride up to a high ridge of Fuente Dé. Walk the ridge, visit the cafe, and marvel at the mountains. See p. 647.
- **Visiting the Illa de Cabrera Natural Reserve off Mallorca:** Although Cabrera was a pirate base in the 13th and 14th centuries, now it is a natural reserve where you can see huge colonies of shearwaters and gulls, as well as ospreys, falcons, and sea hawks. See p. 706.

THE best SMALL TOWNS

- **Cuenca:** With its famous *casas colgadas* (hanging houses) cantilevered over the edge of a precipitous gorge and its three museums of contemporary art, this aerie engages the imagination even as it wins over the heart. Few villages in Spain seem so magically suspended between earth and sky. See p. 184.

The bridge across the Júcar gorge, leading to Cuenca's hanging houses.

- **Mijas:** Even as the countryside around it becomes a solid mass of hotels and vacation home subdivisions, tiny whitewashed Mijas—tucked into the hills above sprawling Torremolinos—remains a quintessential Andalucan village where life revolves around ancient churches, excellent bars, and a tiny religious shrine. See p. 376.
- **Aranjuez:** A graceful, tree-lined town sprang up around the royal palace here to anchor some of the richest farmland near Madrid. After touring the palace and walking through the gardens, feast at the village's great restaurants, known for cooking with the famous local produce. See p. 162.

A lively alley in Mijas.

- **Ronda:** Ronda is famed for its 150m (492-ft.) gorge created by the Río Guadelevín. The Romans bridged the river at the water's edge, and Moors built homes and palaces all the way to the top. The Christians added a bullring and a belvedere. What more could you ask for? See p. 319.

- **Zamora:** When the Christian kings of Castilla took back Zamora from the Moors, they made sure they could hold it by building two dozen fabulous Romanesque churches in the 12th and 13th centuries. The town fortifications have great views along the Río Duero. See p. 210.
- **Deià:** Set on the western end of Mallorca, this high-country village of stone houses draped in bougainvillea was the favored retreat of English poet and interpreter of Greek mythology Robert Graves. It was here he wrote the enduring historical novel *I, Claudius.* See p. 714.
- **Santo Domingo de la Calzada:** Established in the 12th century as a stopover for pilgrims tramping across Spain to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, this little village in La Rioja eventually grew into a full-fledged pilgrim town where live chickens are kept in the cathedral. See p. 205.

The fires of Las Fallas.

THE best FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS

- **Carnaval in Cádiz (Feb):** Cádiz makes the most of the pre-Lenten season with imaginative attire and witty, satirical revues in the streets and theaters. No politician or public figure is spared. For 2 weeks, Gaditanos parade around in costume, often breaking into song. See p. 41.
- **Las Fallas in Valencia (Mar):** Valencianos bid farewell to winter with a bang, or rather lots of them, in the explosions, fireworks, and pageantry of Las Fallas. Events climax on March 19 with the simultaneous burning of elaborate scenes in every public square. See p. 403.
- **Feria de Abril in Sevilla (Apr):** Possibly the most colorful spring fair in Spain, Sevilla pulls out all the stops with drop-dead gorgeous flamenco fashion, a daily parade of carriages and riders, and a tent community where parties run for 6 days nonstop. Feria also launches the bullfight season. See p. 41.
- **Feria del Caballo in Jerez (May):** Jerez has held its horseflesh livestock show since 1284, and few festivities so highlight Spain's equestrian traditions. Bullfights, horse riding, all-night dancing, sherry-drinking, and horse-trading continue all week. The city also becomes an enormous ring for dressage and jumping events. See p. 42.

A horse-drawn carriage at Feria del Caballo.

- **Sanfermines in Pamplona (July):** This festival nominally honoring San Fermín pays equal tribute to the cult of the bull and the cult of Bacchus. The running of the bulls through the streets is an annual spectacle, and few would dare run with the bulls were it not for the wine. See p. 43.
- **Misteri d'Elx (Mystery of Elche; Aug):** For more than 6 centuries, the citizens of Elche/Elx have staged a mystery play based on the mystical powers of the Black Virgin. The medieval dialect may be hard to understand, but you'll grasp the enduring faith. See p. 426.
- **La Mercé in Barcelona (Sept):** Bidding summer adieu and welcoming fall, this Catalán festival honors the patron saint of Barcelona, Mare de Deu de la Merce. Fire-breathing dragons run the streets at night, and the Castellers build human towers in the Plaça de Sant Jaume.
- **International Film Festival in San Sebastián (Sept):** Screen stars from Hollywood, Italy, France, and even Japan and China show up in this resort town to plug their films and pose for the paparazzi. Constant screenings, lectures, and panel discussions fill out the days between meals. See p. 44.

THE best OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH SPAIN

- **Toro:** This dusty little wine town on the Río Duero east of Zamora huddles behind medieval city walls. The carvings on the Pórtico de la Majestad (Portal of Majesty) of its 13th-century church are some of Spain's greatest Gothic art. Most Toro shops sell wine—very, very good wine. See p. 213.

- **Cadaqués:** Isolated along the coast over a steep range of mountains, Cadaqués remains the sweet fishing town that has drawn so many artists over the years. The village wraps around a half-dozen rocky coves with a stony beach better for landing small boats than sunbathing. See p. 550.
- **Poblet:** Once the greatest of Catalunya's Carthusian monasteries, Poblet has retreated to near oblivion. Yet the fortified monastery village west of Barcelona has a medieval charm, as if it were plucked directly from Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose*. The kings of Aragón are buried beneath the church. See p. 519.
- **Úbeda:** In an age when high-speed rail connects most Spanish cities, the elegant Renaissance burg of Úbeda stands aloof in the Andalucían highlands northeast of Granada. It is almost an open-air museum of Spanish Renaissance architecture. See p. 295.
- **Alfaro:** No one knows why, but roughly 400 pairs of white storks have adopted a single church building in this nearly forgotten city of the Navarran countryside as their nest site. Scientists flock here from February to August to observe the birds up close. See p. 582.
- **Guadalupe:** In the 14th century, one of Spain's mysterious Dark Virgin statues was found in a field here, turning the village into a religious shrine. Local *conquistadores* carried the faith to the New World. Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico. See p. 227.
- **Teruel:** The Aragónese city of Teruel northeast of Valencia is a treasure-trove of Mudéjar architecture—a uniquely Spanish style that came about when Christian patrons engaged Moorish architects and workmen. The synthesis of cultures yielded some of the richest designs of the late Middle Ages.

SPAIN IN DEPTH

2

The French and English used to say that "Europe ends at the Pyrenees," and in a sense, that's true. Spain has always been walled off from the rest of Europe by the mountains that proved impermeable in both directions. (The French learned that at Roncevalles when the Basques defeated Roland, and neither the Moors nor the kings of Aragón could subdue Gascony.) Spain developed on its own path, evolving customs—and even art, architecture, and gastronomy—that owed as much to Arabic North Africa as to the Roman Empire. Consequently, Spain does not look like, sound like, or even taste like the rest of Europe.

Thirty-six years (1939–75) as a political pariah under Franco simply underscored those differences. Yet the return of democracy unleashed a cultural renaissance and the Spanish stepped back onto the world stage. Madrid and Barcelona emerged as major European artistic and intellectual centers, and Bilbao followed suit. Now Spain is a leader in innovative architecture, film, fashion, and gastronomy. Not since the era when Spanish galleons sailed home from the Americas laden with riches has Spain been so in the vanguard of European life.

But the past remains, layered like the religious sites where the cathedral covers a mosque, built atop a Visigothic church, on the site of a Roman temple. A glorious past and a brilliant present await every visitor. The future is already unfolding.

SPAIN TODAY

The worldwide financial crisis that began in 2009 continues to shake Spain, which teetered on the edge of financial disaster in 2011 before pulling back from the brink. Austerity measures undertaken to secure assistance from the European Union central bank sent many businesses and individuals into bankruptcy, made capital scarce, and, starting in July 2011, reversed the course of inflation and began a period of deflation. In practical terms, this meant that nearly a quarter of the Spanish workforce was idled, and the Socialist Workers party was voted out of office in December when Prime Minister José Louis Rodríguez Zapatero declined to run. The resulting center-right government under the Popular Party immediately stepped up to trim government spending and restore financial stability.

Despite financial hardships, Spain has aggressively upgraded its infrastructure, bringing 7,000km (4,350 miles) of rail track to high-speed standards. In late 2010, Spain surpassed France for the largest network in Europe of high-speed trains, and was on track to add another 2,000km (1,250 miles) by early 2013. The rail projects aim to make major cities reachable by train from Madrid within 4 hours, or from Barcelona in 6½ hours. The first high-speed line opened in 1992 to Sevilla, cutting travel time to 2½ hours. Other lines fully operational include Madrid-Barcelona (2½ hr.), Madrid-Valencia (1½ hr.), Madrid-Málaga (2½ hr.).

PREVIOUS PAGE: **A bullfighter in Sevilla.**

Projects underway include the Madrid-Vitoria line and its linked Basque Y connector to Bilbao and San Sebastián, a Madrid-Lisbon line, and the Levante connector to the Madrid-Valencia line, which will speed travel to Alicante.

Air travel has not been neglected. The Bilbao Airport—nicknamed La Paloma, or "the Dove" for the graceful white wings of its terminals—was designed by Santiago Calatrava and opened in 2000; it is currently undergoing expansions to be finished in 2014. Barajas Airport in Madrid added the immense and extremely efficient Terminal 4 in 2006, based on the modern design of Antonio Lamela and Richard Rogers. It brought the capacity of Barajas up to 70 million passengers yearly.

Impressions

I also love the Spaniard, for he is a type in his own right, a copy of no one.

—Stendhal

During this same period, Spain has continued to invest extensively in green industry, taking advantage of the brilliant sunshine by covering vast stretches of land with solar panels. Spain has been famous for windmills, of course, since Cervantes described Don Quixote doing battle with one. The windmills that cover its coastal mountains, however, dwarf anything the good knight ever saw. Spain is among Europe's leaders in power generated by wind. Rather than invest in nuclear power, Spain has sought to make itself more energy-independent through alternative sources, including fuels like biodiesel made from its vast reserves of sunflower oil.

A number of Spain's major cities have been on the move. Madrid, the seat of government, continues to expand and make improvements, upgrading its roads, its rail links, and even its parks. The city is approaching six million inhabitants, and demands for services are increasing. Building on the attention brought by the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao continues to blossom, with a veritable architectural zoo of buildings by major world architects lining its riverfront. The experience of Bilbao has inspired other cities to approach cultural development as an economic engine, with Valencia the first to benefit by Bilbao's example. In fact, the "Guggenheim Effect" has inspired cultural development around the globe.

Tourism continues to dominate the economy, and, increasingly, North Americans are becoming part of the changing landscape. While many European visitors head for Spain's beach resorts, Americans are the top visitor group to Madrid, Barcelona, and Sevilla.

No longer interested in the loud and boozy image that its coastal resorts earned in the 1970s and 1980s by hosting so many cheap package tours from Britain, Spain has reached out to more upscale visitors. Bargain Spain of the $5-a-day variety is now a distant memory, as prices have risen, though they have moderated in the last few years. The government is trying to lure visitors away from the overcrowded coasts (especially Mallorca, the Costa del Sol, and the Costa Brava) and steer them to the country's less traveled but more historic destinations. Government *paradores* and other improved tourist facilities, better restaurants, and spruced-up attractions have sent the message.

Spain continues to change as it moves deeper into the 21st century. The most remarkable advance has been in the legal status of women, who now have access to contraception, abortion, and divorce, and the sensitivity to LGBT rights. Sights once unimaginable now take place: an annual lesbian "kiss-in" at Madrid's Puerta del Sol, and women officiating as governors of men's prisons. Although

Spain remains a nominally Roman Catholic country, the birthrate is one of the lowest in the developed world, and the population's mean age is rising.

Spain's constitutional monarchy continues to function smoothly. In 1975, when the king assumed the throne after Franco's death, he was called "Juan Carlos the Brief," implying that his reign would be short. But he swiftly distanced himself from Franco's dark legacy and became a hardworking and serious sovereign. He staved off a coup attempt in 1981, and he and the other Spanish royals remain popular. Juan Carlos even makes do on a meager $7 million salary—less than one-tenth of what England's Queen Elizabeth II is reputed to earn in a year.

For all its hard economic knocks over the last few years, Spain remains vibrant and resilient, even as it evolves into a looser and looser confederation of regions with their own cultures. The Basque Country's economic strength stands in contrast to the rest of the country, and Basque culture is on the rise. Barcelona and Catalunya are more expressively Catalán than they've been since the rule of Jaume I. The Galego language is resurgent in Galicia, and Andalucía has proudly reclaimed its complex history and culture, making it again a bridgehead between European and North African traditions.

LOOKING BACK AT SPAIN

Iberian Prehistory to the Arrival of the Moors

The peopling of the Iberian Peninsula began around 35,000 B.C., with the arrival of Cro-Magnon refugees from the glaciation of Europe. Traces of the first settlers are scattered, and are found mainly in the sophisticated wall paintings in **Altamira** (p. 646) and other caves along the Cantabrian and Basque coasts. In addition to the Altimira museum, both the Picos de Europa park visitors center at **Sotama** (p. 649) and the **Basque archaeological museum** (p. 624) in Bilbao offer good overviews of the archaeological information about the first Spaniards.

Two Bronze Age cultures had emerged in Spain by the time other Mediterranean cultures made contact. The Iberians are perhaps best known today

DATELINE

11th c. B.C.	Phoenicians settle Spain's coasts.
650 B.C.	Greeks colonize the east.
600 B.C.	Celts cross the Pyrenees and settle in Spain.
6th–3rd c. B.C.	Carthaginians make Cartagena their colonial capital, driving out the Greeks.
218–201 B.C.	Second Punic War: Rome defeats Carthage.
2nd c. B.C.-2nd c. A.D.	Rome controls most of Iberia. Christianity spreads.
5th c.	Vandals, then Visigoths, invade Spain.
8th c.	Moors conquer most of Spain.
1214	More than half of Iberia is reclaimed by Catholics.
1469	Fernando of Aragón marries Isabel of Castilla y León.
1492	Catholic monarchs seize Granada, the last Moorish stronghold. Columbus lands in the New World.
1519	Cortés conquers Mexico. Carlos I is crowned Holy Roman emperor, as Carlos V.

through a few examples of sophisticated sculpture, ***La Dama de Baeza*** and ***La Dama d'Elx,*** both seated funerary figures. The former is in the **National Archaeology Museum** in Madrid (p. 87), the latter in the **Elche Archaeology Museum.** The other culture was Celtic, and flourished around the Atlantic rim of the peninsula. One of the chief Celtic settlements, at Tartessos at the mouth of the Río Guadalquivír, became famous throughout the ancient world for its jewelry and for its dance and music. (Tartessans invented castanets.) Examples of exquisite Celtic goldwork are in the **National Archaeology Museum** in Madrid (p. 87) and in the **Archaeological and Historical Museum** in A Coruña (p. 668).

Phoenician settlement began in Iberia around 1100 B.C., most notably in Málaga and in the peninsular city of Cádiz, where extraordinary Phoenician sarcophagi and some Phoenician jewelry are displayed the **Museo de Cádiz** (p. 347). Within 200 years, Greek traders began to give the Phoenicians competition, founding the trading post at **Empuriès** on the Costa Brava and pushing into the Balearics and coastal Andalucía. Foreshadowing the much later invasion from North Africa, Carthaginians began colonizing Iberia in the 6th century B.C. Little remains of their material culture.

In 218 B.C., the Romans landed and changed everything. Establishing a beachhead to battle the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War, they proceeded to lay roads across Iberia and either conquer or co-opt everyone they met along the way. Wine grapes and olive trees had already been brought by the Greeks and Phoenicians; the Romans brought wheat, law and order, a hunger for Iberian fish paste, and an insatiable need for soldiers to fight in the Roman legions. By the time of Julius Caesar, Spain (Hispania) was under Roman law and began a long period of peace and prosperity.

Rome's three administrative centers retain significant traces of the conquerors. **Tarragona** (p. 512) and **Mérida** (p. 239) not only have intact sections of Roman road—but they also have functional and semi-functional Roman institutions, like the theater in Mérida and the amphitheater in Tarragona. Southern

1556	Felipe II inherits the throne and launches the Counter-Reformation.
1588	England defeats the Spanish Armada.
1700	Felipe V becomes king. The War of Spanish Succession follows.
1713	Treaty of Utrecht ends the war. Spain's colonies are reduced.
1759	Carlos III ascends to the throne.
1808	Napoleon places his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne.
1813	Wellington drives the French out of Spain; the monarchy is restored.
1876	Spain becomes a constitutional monarchy.
1898	Spanish-American War leads to Spain's loss of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines.
1923	Primo de Rivera forms a military directorate.
1930	Right-wing dictatorship ends; Primo de Rivera exiled.
1931	King Alfonso XIII abdicates; Second Republic is born.
1936–39	Civil War between the Loyalist Popular Front and the Nationalists led by Gen. Francisco Franco.

continued

Spain's third administrative center, **Itálica** (p. 274), gave Rome two emperors, but the city was abandoned in favor of nearby Sevilla, with its better water supply.

All over Spain, the Romans were such great builders that they created tens of thousands of columns and capitals over 600 years of rule—architectural elements that were reused by their successors and can still be seen in buildings around the country. Roman baths can be found in some areas, though many were converted to *hammams* under the Moors. Roman art, per se, can be found in most large museums in the form of mosaics, coins, small jewelry, pottery, and glassware.

Iberia was thoroughly Romanized during this period, although the Basques negotiated a fragile peace with Rome that allowed them to maintain their right of self-governance. Succeeding rulers granted the Basques the same autonomy until the late 19th century. The Pax Romana prevailed throughout the peninsula, and Latin became the Iberian language. Iberians became Romans.

When Rome fell in the 5th century, Spain was overrun, first by the Vandals (who ultimately headed south into the mountains of North Africa) and then by the Visigoths from Eastern Europe, who were invited by Rome to drive out the Vandals and decided to keep Iberia for themselves.

The Visigothic rulers were a minority class who kept themselves apart from their subjects, although they did adopt the Latin language, and eventually orthodox Christianity. Over more than 2 centuries, the Visigoths left surprisingly little behind: a few churches in northern Spain (Palencia's cathedral, in particular), and some of the most sophisticated gold jewelry ever fashioned, the royal jewels and crowns displayed in the **National Archaeological Museum** in Madrid (p. 87). Visigothic capitals are still visible on public and private buildings all over the country, including several in Granada.

Moorish Spain & the Reconquest

In A.D. 711, Moorish warriors led by the great Berber general Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and set about conquering Iberia. Visigothic armies were largely staffed with slave labor, and folded when faced with the invading

1939	Franco establishes dictatorship, which will last 36 years.
1941	Spain technically stays neutral in World War II, but Franco favors Germany.
1955	Spain joins the United Nations.
1975	Juan Carlos becomes king. Franco dies.
1978	New democratic constitution initiates reforms.
1981	Coup attempt by right-wing officers fails.
1982	Socialists gain power after 43 years of right-wing rule.
1986	Spain joins the European Community (now the European Union).
1992	Barcelona hosts the Summer Olympics, Sevilla hosts Expo '92.
1996	A conservative party defeats the Socialist party, ending its 13-year rule. José María Aznar is chosen prime minister.
1998	Guggenheim Museum at Bilbao opens and is inaugurated.
2002	Spain adopts the euro as its national currency.
2003	Basque terrorists continue a campaign of terror against the government.

North African warriors. By 714, the Moors controlled all but the far northern reaches of Iberia, where the Basques and the Asturian Visigoths held out in their mountain lairs.

The Iberian population had collapsed under the chaotic rule of the Visigoths, and the Moors began to repopulate their conquered land, which they called al-Andalus. Córdoba became the capital and quickly developed as the most advanced city on the continent. While northern Europe was foundering in the Dark Ages, Córdoba was a great intellectual center and scientific capital. Religious tolerance was an official policy under the Umayyad Caliphate (929–1031). Not only was Córdoba's **Great Mosque** (**La Mezquita;** p. 278) erected in this period, but the city also was a hotbed of scholarship, as European, North African, Near Eastern, and Jewish scholars flocked to the city. Notable advances were made in agriculture, industry, literature, philosophy, and medicine.

The caliphs welcomed the Jews, who often served as administrators, ambassadors, and financial officers. Even after the fall of the Caliphate, Córdoba persisted as an intellectual center. The great Jewish theologian Moses Maimondides (1135–1204) and the Muslim polymath Averroes (1126–98), both Córdobans and both driven out by the religious extremists who took over al-Andalus, recorded seminal works of theology and philosophy (and in the case of Averroes, science and mathematics) that would inform both Jewish and Muslim traditions and laid the groundwork for the European Renaissance centuries later.

Civil war destroyed the Caliphate, and for 50 years, al-Andalus consisted of a group of weak city-states. The Christian kings of the north, specifically Alfonso VI of Castilla, took advantage of the situation to win back much of the peninsula. El Cid pressed the reconquest of Valencia, taking what is now northeast Spain, in 1094.

The Reconquest, as the northern Spaniards called their efforts to retake Iberia, became a holy war of Christianity versus Islam, beginning with the small victory of Pelayo at the Battle of Covadonga in the Asturian mountains, and gathering strength as the Moors lost interest in the more far-flung parts of their empire.

2004	Al Qaeda strikes Spanish trains in the deadliest terrorist attack in Europe since World War II. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero is elected as Socialist prime minister.
2005	Spain legalizes same-sex marriage.
2006	Basque separatist group ETA negotiates with conservative government for cease-fire. A bomb detonates at Madrid's airport; ETA claims responsibility. Madrid airport defiantly opens new Terminal 4, nearly doubling passenger capacity.
2007	ETA calls an official end to cease-fire.
2009	Spain's once-buoyant economy suffers severe downturn. Unemployment reaches 17%.
2010	Spain hovers on the brink of bankruptcy.
2011	Spain bans smoking in bars and restaurants. Basque separatist group ETA declares permanent cease-fire. Right-center People's Party headed by Mariano Rajoy wins control of government over widespread anger at financial situation.

SPANIARDS WHO RULED rome

Trajan, Roman emperor A.D. 98–117
Born in Baetica south of modern-day Córdoba in A.D. 53 to a non-noble family, Trajan rose through the military ranks to become Roman administrator of Tarragona. After supporting Emperor Domitian against an attempted coup, he was subsequently "adopted" by Domitian's weak successor and set in line to become emperor. He is best recalled for reshaping the public face of Rome.

Hadrian, Roman emperor A.D. 117–138
Born in Italica outside modern Sevilla in A.D. 76, Hadrian was unusual among Roman emperors for touring all the provinces of the empire. He is best known for building Hadrian's Wall, marking the northern limit of Roman power in Britain.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor A.D. 161–180
Born in Roman Baetica south of Córdoba in A.D. 121 to a noble family (his great-grandfather was a senator), he served as a warrior and provincial administrator until he succeeded Hadrian as emperor. He is remembered chiefly for his Stoic philosophy *(Meditations)*, much of it written while a soldier campaigning in Greece.

Theodosius I, Roman emperor A.D. 379–395
Born in Italica outside Sevilla to a military family, he was a distinguished military officer who had retired to his family estate in Galicia before being invited to serve as co-emperor of Rome in 379. He was given responsibility for the eastern Roman Empire. His counterpart died in 392, and for 3 years Theodosius I was the last emperor to rule over both the eastern and western Roman Empires. He is recognized by the Eastern Orthodox faith as St. Theodosius.

The Christian faith became a rallying point, and with some assistance from France and the rest of Christendom, the northern warlords began to call themselves kings and consolidated territory. By the 12th century, power was concentrated in the kingdoms of Aragón (which ultimately came to rule parts of France, Italy, and Sicily), Castilla y León (which swallowed up Galicia), and al-Andalus. The Almoravid Dynasty of Morocco halted the Spanish advance into al-Andalus in 1086, but they were soon overthrown by fundamentalist Islamists, the Almohads, who concentrated their military might in Sevilla.

It was game on between the Christians and the Moors. Christian kings began to retake northern Spain. In each town they conquered, they built churches and planted vineyards. Zamora in Castilla y León is perhaps the greatest example of religious overkill. It has two dozen surviving 12th-century Romanesque churches. Just east of it, in Toro, are some of the oldest vineyards in Spain.

In mountainous northern Spain, the Cistercian order began to construct squat fortress monasteries in the 12th century, usually surrounded by extensive vineyards. Not only did they secure these frontiers for Christianity, but they also introduced a number of French grapes that would prove instrumental in Spanish viticulture, especially Grenache, known in Spain as Garnacha. (The monks sent Monstrell back to France, where it became widely planted as Mourvèdre.)

Starting in the late 10th century, Christian Spaniards also began producing devotional art in the northern and eastern provinces. Painting and mosaics in Catalunya show the Byzantine influence of northern Italy, while sculptures

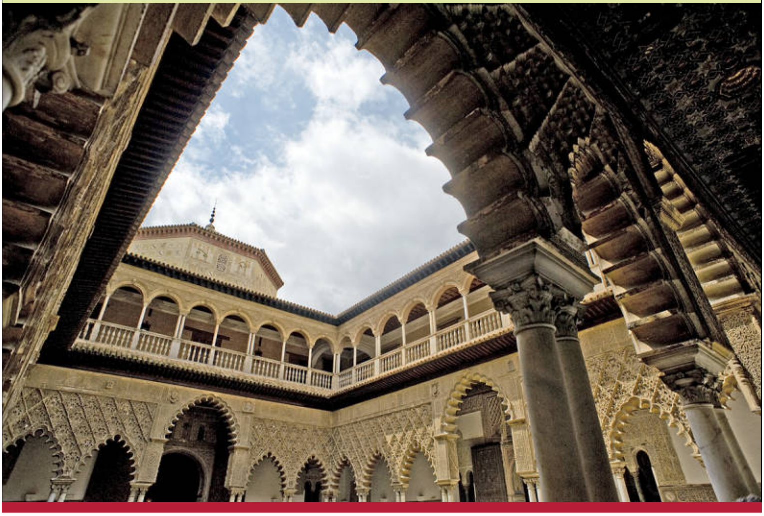
ART & ARCHITECTURE OF al-andalus

The Moorish legacy in Spain persists in its architectural style and in decorative motifs. The Muslims took the injunction against graven images so seriously that they produced no art in a traditional Western sense—although the remarkably intricate **geometric designs** and swooping, exaggerated letters of **Kufic inscriptions** played out in woodcarving, painted tiles, and plasterworks on Moorish palaces are decorations of the highest aesthetic order.

The Moors brought with them an Arabic architectural style that changed over the centuries but kept many features that give their remaining buildings, especially in Andalucía, a distinctly Eastern flair. The Moors built three major structures: mosques, alcázares, and alcazabas. **Mosques,** Islamic religious buildings, were connected to minarets, tall towers from which the muezzin would call the people to prayer. **Alcázares** (see photo below of Sevilla's Alcázare) were palaces built with many small courtyards and gardens with fountains and greenery. **Alcazabas** were fortresses built high atop hills and fortified like any defensive structure.

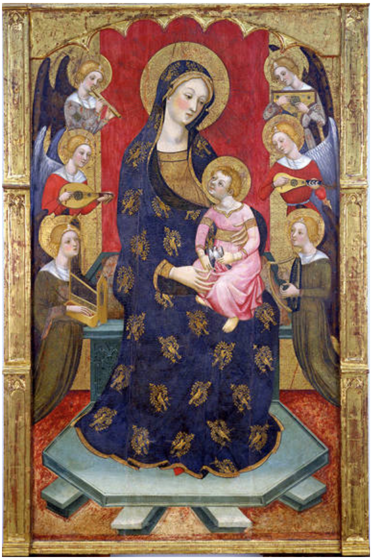
The early **Caliphate** style of Córdoba lasted from the 8th to the 11th centuries, replaced by the most austerely religious **Almohad** style in Sevilla in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Mezquita-Catedral de Córdoba is the best-preserved building in the Caliphate style. Of the Almohad period, the best remaining example is **Sevilla's Giralda Tower,** a minaret but little altered when its accompanying mosque was converted into a cathedral; the mosque and tower at **Zaragoza's Palacio de la Aljafería** have survived from the era as well. The crowning achievement of the Nasrid—of all Spanish Moorish architecture—is **Granada's Alhambra** palace and the adjacent **Generalife** gardens. Certain architectural features, such as the use of the horseshoe arch and the striped columns so prominent in Córdoba's mosque, flourished in the Mudéjar Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and are still used as a shorthand for tribute to Moorish design.



along the northerly pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela are related to French models, though they are often more symbolic (and primitive looking) than realistic.

Significant examples are found in **Barcelona's Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (p. 451) and in **Pamplona's Museo de Navarra** (p. 572). Most of Catalunya's great Romanesque paintings were detached from their village churches in the early 20th century and are now housed in the Barcelona museum. In the **Catedral de Santiago de Compostela** (p. 674), the *Pórtico de la Gloria* is a 12th-century masterpiece of Romanesque sculpture, just as the cathedral is a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture. Both the carved doorway and the church design are attributed to **Maestro Mateo.** Similarly amazing stone carvings are found along the de facto borderland of the Río Duero, notably in Toro and Zamora.



Madonna with Angels Playing Music (1390), by Pedro Serra, at the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Starting in the 13th century, parts of northern Spain began to adopt Gothic architecture to appeal to the faithful. Instead of dark, somber, relatively unadorned Romanesque interiors that forced the eyes of the faithful toward the altar, the Gothic interior enticed the churchgoers' gazes upward to high ceilings filled with light. The priests still conducted Mass in Latin, but now peasants could "read" the Gothic comic books of stained-glass windows. Perhaps the greatest example was the León cathedral, where the walls are practically curtains of glass and the roof is supported by flying buttresses. León was a fine example of French Gothic, which was pursued in Spain in the early to mid–13th century, first in adapting the Romanesque **Catedral de Santa María** in **Burgos** (p. 202), and then in the **Catedral de Toledo** (p. 152) and the **Catedral de León** (p. 206).

At the same time as the priests were reaping souls, the Christian kings pressed the military challenge to Islam. The Reconquest gathered steam until 1212; at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the combined Christian forces defeated the Almohad armies, crushing the Andalucían kingdom based in Sevilla. It was a battle of giants, as the Almohad sultan Caliph al-Nasir gathered armies from across North Africa and as far away as Senegal to meet the combined armies of Castilla, León, Aragón, and Portugal.

With the Almohad dynasty smashed, al-Andalus was rudderless for a generation until the general Mohammed I ibn Nasr established the Kingdom of Granada in 1238. A pragmatic man, he cut a deal to be a vassal of the equally pragmatic Fernando II of Castilla, the most powerful of the Christian kings. The Nasrids gained free reign in their Granada lands, and ultimately constructed the Alhambra. In return, they paid tribute to Castilla in the form of sub-Saharan gold for the next 250 years. The agreement brought a longer peace to Iberian Peninsula than any since the Pax Romana.

Statues at the Catedral de Toledo.

Things changed when two ambitious northern crowns were joined in 1469 as Isabel of Castilla y León wed Fernando of Aragón. Isabel, at least, was deeply religious and the couple established the Spanish Inquisition in 1480 to eradicate heresy and secure the primacy of Roman Catholicism. They also revived the holy war against Islam. The "Catholic Kings," as Pope Alexander VI (a Borja from Valencia) dubbed them, campaigned through southern Spain and captured Granada in 1492. The Reconquest was complete, and, in theory, Spain was wiped clean of Judaism and Islam after the Catholic Kings ordered everyone to convert to Catholicism or leave the country.

That same year, Isabel and Fernando sent Columbus to find a route to the spice islands of the Far East, an event memorialized in statuary in the garden of **Córdoba's Alcázar** (p. 278). In October, Columbus landed in the West Indies, laying the foundations for a far-flung empire that brought wealth and power to Spain during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Golden Age & Later Decline

Columbus's voyage, and the conquistadors' subsequent exploration of the New World, ushered Spain into its Golden Age. In the first half of the 16th century, Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean, Cortés seized Mexico for Spain, Pizarro took Peru, and a Spanish ship (initially commanded by the Portuguese Magellan, who was killed during the voyage) circumnavigated the globe.

The conquistadors took Catholicism to the New World and shipped cargoes of gold and silver back to Spain. The Spanish Empire extended all the way to the Philippines. The Habsburg king Carlos I, grandson of Fernando and Isabel, became the most powerful prince in Europe when he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor and took the name Carlos V. He ruled Spain and Naples, the Holy Roman Empire, and was lord of Germany, duke of Burgundy and the Netherlands, as well as ruler of the New World territories.

Like his grandparents, Carlos V was a patron of the arts and built one of the grandest Renaissance palaces in the country within the grounds of the Alhambra. The rules of Renaissance architecture stressed proportion, order, classical inspiration, and mathematical precision to create unified, balanced structures based on Italian models. The earliest—and most Spanish—Renaissance style (really a transitional form from Gothic) was marked by facades done in an almost Moorish intricacy and was called **Plateresque,** for it was said to resemble the work of *plateros* (silversmiths). Beyond Granada's **Palacio de Carlos V** (p. 305), the best examples are found in Salamanca in the **Universidad** (p. 218) and the **Convento de San Esteban** (p. 220).

More classical Renaissance buildings were erected by Felipe II, son of Carlos V, who hired Juan de Herrera to design both **El Escorial** (p. 167) and the **cathedral of Valladolid** (p. 197), which was later finished in a conflicting exuberant baroque style. The same architect also laid out Madrid's **Plaza Mayor** (p. 82).

Spain was growing rich on the take from the New World, as the **Torre del Oro** (p. 258) in Sevilla guarded the boats unloading the bullion. But much of Spain's wealth and human resources were wasted in religious and secular conflicts. First Jews, then Muslims, and finally Catholicized Moors were driven out—and with them much of the country's prosperity. When Felipe II ascended the throne in 1556, Spain could indeed boast vast possessions: the New World colonies; Naples, Milan, Genoa, Sicily, and other portions of Italy; the Spanish Netherlands (modern Belgium and the Netherlands); and portions of Austria and Germany. But the seeds of decline had already been planted.

A fanatic Catholic, Felipe II devoted his energies to subduing the Protestant revolt in the Netherlands and to becoming the standard-bearer for the Counter-Reformation. He tried to return England to Catholicism, first by marrying Mary I ("Bloody Mary") and later by wooing her half-sister, Elizabeth I, who rebuffed him. When, in 1588, he resorted to sending the Armada, it was ignominiously defeated; that defeat symbolized the decline of Spain on the international stage.

At the same time, Spain was launched on its Golden Age. Felipe II moved the capital of Spain from Toledo to Madrid—against the advice of Carlos V, who had suggested Lisbon for its more pleasant climate. Madrid was electrified and grew quickly from dusty outpost to royal city. **Miguel de Cervantes** (1547–1616), a petty bureaucrat with a grand imagination, wrote his tales of Don Quixote and set the standard for Spanish prose. The rascal priest **Lope de Vega** (1562–1635) wrote poems and plays incessantly, redefining the Spanish theater in the company of **Calderón de la Barca** (1600–81) and **Tirso de Molina** (1579–1648).

El Greco (1541–1614) came to Toledo from Italy and brought the Italian Renaissance with him, though he could not curry favor in court and remained outside royal circles. **Diego Velázquez** (1599–1660) rose to become court painter to Felipe IV, and the two men were bound like brothers over several decades as Velázquez chronicled the royal family and the king's descent into brooding depression. His paintings were rarely seen in his own day and became public only when the royal art collection was installed in the **Museo del Prado** (p. 87) in the 19th century.

Other major painters of the Golden Age were **Bartolomé Esteban Murillo** (1617–82), a rather joyous religious painter based for much of his life in his native Sevilla, and another Sevillano, **Francisco de Zurbarán,** whose work is often considered severe and ascetic. (He often painted portraits

Miguel de Cervantes (seated), creator of Don Quixote (on horseback), in Madrid's Plaza de España.

of monks, as well as images of hermit saints.) Influenced by the teachings of Santa Teresa of Ávila, his work is imbued with a deep mysticism. He was the first of the Spanish baroque painters to make extensive use of chiaroscuro in the style of Caravaggio.

In 1700, a Bourbon prince, Felipe V, became king, and the country fell under the influence of France. Felipe V's right to the throne was challenged by a Habsburg archduke of Austria, thus giving rise to the War of the Spanish Succession. When it ended, Spain had lost Flanders, its Italian possessions, and Gibraltar (still held by the British today). When the medieval royal palace burned in 1734, Felipe V ordered a new palace to be built in its spot, now known as the **Palacio Real** (p. 83). The Italian architects and decorators responsible for the final over-the-top baroque appearance were very much in keeping with the Bourbon family tradition. Felipe V had aspirations to re-create Versailles in Madrid; alas, they fell short.

During the 18th century, Spain's direction changed with each sovereign. Carlos III (1759–88) developed the country economically and culturally. Known as the "Mayor King," he set about remaking the face of Madrid with the aid of Spain's principal neoclassical architect, the great **Ventura Rodríguez** (1717–85), who laid out the grand boulevard of the **Paseo del Prado** and worked with Juan de Villanueva (1739–1811) on the design of one of Spain's best neoclassical buildings, the **Museo del Prado** (p. 87).

His son, Carlos IV, was best known for being a crack shot and an otherwise rather incompetent monarch. He became embroiled in wars with France, and the weakness of the Spanish monarchy enabled Napoleon to place his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne in 1808. Long removed from his position as court painter, **Francisco de Goya** chronicled the French invasion in horrifying detail.

Napoleon Through Franco

Although the Spanish monarchy was restored in 1814 with the defeat and exile of Napoleon, the French occupation of Spain encouraged Spanish colonists to rebel. The South American colonies and Mexico established revolutionary independent governments, and at the end of the 19th century the United States went to war with Spain, resulting in Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico separating from Spain in 1898. The loss of the overseas empire was a traumatic event in Spanish culture, prompting a lot of hand-wringing in the ruling and intellectual classes, and extensive emigration from poorer segments of Spain to countries of the New World, where greater opportunity seemed to await.

THE SPECTACLE OF death

For obvious reasons, many people consider bullfighting cruel and shocking, but as Ernest Hemingway pointed out in *Death in the Afternoon,* "The bullfight is not a sport in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the word; that is, it is not an equal contest or an attempt at an equal contest between a bull and a man. Rather it is a tragedy: the death of the bull, which is played, more or less well, by the bull and the man involved and in which there is danger for the man but certain death for the bull."

When the symbolic drama of the bullfight is acted out, some believe it reaches a higher plane, the realm of art. Some people argue that it is not a public exhibition of cruelty but a highly skilled art form that requires the will to survive, courage, showmanship, and gallantry. Many Spaniards are, at best, indifferent to bullfights and *corridas* have even been banned in Catalunya. Nonetheless, the spectacle remains an authentic Spanish experience and reveals much about the character of the land and its people.

The *corrida* season lasts from early spring to around mid-October. Fights are held in a *plaza de toros* (bullring), including the oldest ring in remote Ronda and Madrid's Las Ventas, one of the most important in Spain. Sunday is *corrida* day in most major Spanish cities, although Madrid and Barcelona may also have fights on Thursday.

Tickets fall into three classifications, and prices are based on your exposure to the famed Spanish sun: *sol* (sun), the cheapest; *sombra* (shade), the most expensive; and *sol y sombra* (a mixture of sun and shade), the medium-price range. Many Spaniards skip the tickets altogether and crowd into a bar to watch the bullfight on television—often a good introduction for visitors as well.

The *corrida* begins with a parade. For many viewers, this may be the high point of the afternoon's festivities, as all the bullfighters are clad in their *trajes de luces* (suits of light).

Bullfights are divided into thirds *(tercios).* The first is the *tercio de capa* (cape), during which the matador tests the bull with passes and gets acquainted with the animal. The second portion, the *tercio de varas* (sticks), begins with the lance-carrying *picadores* on horseback, who weaken, or "punish," the bull by jabbing him in the shoulder area (see photo). The horses are sometimes gored, even though they wear protective padding, or the horse and rider might be tossed into the air by the now-infuriated bull. The *picadores* are followed by the *banderilleros,* whose job it is to puncture the bull with pairs of boldly colored darts.

In the final *tercio de muleta,* the action narrows down to the lone fighter and the bull. Gone are the fancy capes.

In 1876, Spain became a constitutional monarchy. But labor unrest, disputes with the Catholic Church, and war in Morocco combined to create political chaos. Conditions eventually became so bad that the Cortés, or parliament, was dissolved in 1923, and Gen. Miguel Primo de Rivera formed a military directorate. Early in 1930, Primo de Rivera resigned, but unrest continued.

On April 14, 1931, a revolution occurred, a republic was proclaimed, and King Alfonso XIII and his family were forced to flee. Initially, the liberal constitutionalists ruled, but soon they were pushed aside by the socialists and anarchists, who adopted a constitution separating church and state, secularizing education,

Instead, the matador uses a small red cloth known as a *muleta,* which to be effective requires a bull with lowered head. (The *picadores* and *banderilleros* have worked to achieve this.) Using the *muleta* as a lure, the matador wraps the bull around himself in various passes, the most dangerous of which is the *natural;* here, the matador holds the *muleta* in his left hand, the sword in his right. Right-hand passes pose less of a threat, since the sword can be used to spread out the *muleta,* making a larger target for the bull. After a number of passes, the time comes for the kill, the moment of truth.

After the bull dies, the highest official at the ring may award the matador an ear from the dead bull, or perhaps both ears, or ears and tail. For a truly extraordinary performance, the hoof is added. Spectators cheer a superlative performance by waving white handkerchiefs, imploring the judge to award a prize. The bullfighter may be carried away as a hero, or if he has displeased the crowd, he may be jeered and chased out of the ring by an angry mob. At a major fight, usually six bulls are killed by three matadors in one afternoon.

and containing several other radical provisions (for example, agrarian reform and the expulsion of the Jesuits).

The extreme nature of these reforms fostered the growth of the conservative Falange party (Falange Española, or Spanish Phalanx), modeled after Italy's Fascist and Germany's National Socialist parties. By the 1936 elections, the country was divided equally between left and right, and political violence was common. On July 18, 1936, the army, supported by Mussolini and Hitler, tried to seize power, igniting the Spanish Civil War. Gen. Francisco Franco, coming from Morocco to Spain, led the Nationalist (rightist) forces in fighting that ravaged the country.

The popular front (also known as Loyalists and as Republicans) opposing Franco was forced to rely mainly on untrained volunteers, including a few heroic Americans called the "Lincoln Brigade." (For those who want an insight into the era, Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a good read.) It took time to turn untrained militias into an army fit to battle Franco's forces, and time was something the Popular Front did not have.

It was a war that would attract the attention of the world. By the summer of 1936, the Soviet Union was sending rubles to aid the revolution by the Republicans. Even Mexico sent war materiel to the Popular Front. Most—but not all—of the volunteers were communists. Italy and Germany contributed war materiel to Franco's forces.

Madrid, controlled by the Popular Front, held out through a brutal siege that lasted for 28 months. Eventually, the government of the Popular Front moved to Valencia for greater safety in 1936.

But in the winter of 1936 to 1937, Franco's forces slowly began to establish power, capturing the Basque capital of Bilbao and eventually Santander. The war shocked the world with its ruthlessness. (World War II hadn't happened yet.) Churches were burned and mass executions occurred, especially memorable in the Basque town of Gernika, which became the subject of one of Picasso's most famous paintings, ***Guernica*** (p. 90).

By October 1, 1936, Franco was clearly in charge of the leadership of nationalist Spain, abolishing popular suffrage and regional autonomy—in effect, launching totalitarian rule of Spain.

The Republicans were split by internal differences, and spy trials were commonplace. At the end of the first year of war, Franco held 35 of Spain's provincial capitals. In 1937, the Republican forces were cut in two, and Madrid was left to fend for itself.

The last great offensive of the war began on December 23, 1938, with an attack by Franco's forces on Barcelona, which fell on January 26 after a campaign of 34 days. Republican forces fled toward France, as a succession of presidents occurred. On March 28, some 200,000 Nationalist troops marched into Madrid, meeting no resistance. The war was over the next day when the rest of Republican Spain surrendered. Lasting 2 years and 254 days, the war claimed some one million lives.

For memories and a sense of the Spanish Civil War, visitors can travel to **El Valle de los Caídos** (**The Valley of the Fallen;** p. 166), outside El Escorial. Ostensibly dedicated to all the dead, it is to Franco sympathizers what Picasso's painting was to Republicans.

Although Franco adopted a neutral position during World War II, his sympathies obviously lay with Germany and Italy, and Spain surreptitiously assisted the Axis powers. This action intensified the diplomatic isolation into which the country was forced after the war's end—in fact, Spain was excluded from the United Nations until 1955 and was effectively shunned in Europe until Franco's death in 1975.

The Death of Franco to the Present

Spaniards did not quite dance in the streets proclaiming "Ding dong, the witch is dead!" when Franco died, but his demise gave Spaniards hope for the first time in two generations and opened the country to the rest of Europe.

Before his death, Franco selected as his successor Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón, son of the pretender to the Spanish throne and grandson of Alfonso XIII. After 1977 elections, a new constitution was approved by the electorate and the king; it guaranteed human and civil rights, as well as free enterprise, and canceled the status of the Roman Catholic Church as the church of Spain. It also granted limited autonomy to several regions, including Catalunya and the Basque provinces, both of which, however, still clamor for more full-fledged autonomy.

In 1981, a group of right-wing military officers seized the Cortés and called upon Juan Carlos to establish a Francoist state. The king refused, and the conspirators were arrested. The fledgling democracy overcame its first test. Its second major accomplishment—under the Socialist administration of Prime Minister Felipe González, the country's first leftist government since 1939—was to gain Spain's entry into the European Community (now European Union) in 1986.

Franco's death had an equally momentous effect on society as on politics. Spanish writers and artists who been effectively banned by the Franco government came back into vogue as a new generation discovered the poetry, plays, and flamboyant homosexuality of Federico García Lorca; the acerbic dissection of dictatorship of Unamuno; and even the humanist impulses of the poet Antonio Machado—dead men all deemed dangerous under Franco.

The initial giddiness of Spaniards was dubbed "La Movida," and symbolized an explosion of freedom that brought iconoclasts like filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar to the fore. He broke into the art-house circuit with his 1988 *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*—a wild comedy about Spanish women and their man problems—and promptly became the flag-bearer of contemporary Spanish cinema. Hallmarks of his films include neurotic but oversexed characters, unsettling mother-son relationships, and the leitmotifs of the death dance of the bullfight and the exuberant emotion of flamenco. His work is seen by critics (and many filmgoers) as defining modern Spanish sensibilities. As Almodóvar himself observed, "I was born at a bad time for Spain, but a really good one for cinema." Other essential Almodóvar films include *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (1990), *Kika* (1993), *All About My Mother* (1999), *Volver* (2006), and *The Skin I Live In* (2011). In the process of making films that wickedly satirize Spanish mores, Almodóvar has discovered and helped develop such major film stars as Antonio Banderas, Penelope Cruz, and even Oscar winner Javier Bardem.

The other major figure in contemporary Spanish cinema is the more conventional Carlos Sauros. His flamenco trilogy—adaptations of Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding),* Bizet's *Carmen,* and Manuel de Falla's *El Amor Brujo (A Love Bewitched)*—represent a highly charged picture of modern Spain through the lens of love triangles.

A guitarist practicing flamenco guitar.

Flamenco had been suppressed under Franco, but began to rise in popularity in the early 1970s just as the dictator's health declined. Young talents like guitarist Paco de Lucía and singer Camerón de la Isla fed into a popular revival of the art form, and their emergence as full-fledged international stars in the early 1980s encouraged other artists to come out of the *peñas* (private clubs for flamenco aficionados) where they had labored—some for decades—to play the bars and clubs of Madrid and the cities of Andalucía. Flamenco soon became fodder for concert halls, as each wave of new artists brought in more fans, and musicians began to explore flamenco fused with everything from Arabic and Indian music to blues, jazz, and pop. Today, Madrid is the epicenter of flamenco, but Sevilla, Jerez, Cádiz, and Malaga remain traditional strongholds of the essentially Andalucían music and dance.

In a similar vein, Spanish gastronomy underwent a sea change. In 1976, the newly formed Club de Gourmets held a round table on gastronomy in Madrid. Two young San Sebastián chefs, Pedro Subijana and Juan Mari Arzak, attended, as did French chef Paul Bocuse, who spoke about his concept of *nouvelle cuisine*. Arzak and Subijana visited Bocuse in early 1977 to see how he executed it, and almost immediately overhauled everything they were doing and created the New Basque Cuisine. It was the rock on which the revolution of Spanish cuisine would be based. In 1984, a young Catalán cook fresh out of military service named Ferran Adrià joined the staff of a tiny seasonal restaurant in Roses called elBulli. By 1987 he was in charge of the whole kitchen. By 1990 he had a second Michelin star and by 1997 a third. In his quest for continuous reinvention of food, Adrià launched a worldwide gastronomic revolution that includes but is hardly limited to the chemistry-set pyrotechnics of molecular gastronomy.

It is a great time to eat in Spain. Chefs have never been held in higher regard—they have finally achieved the fame and status of rock stars and star footballers. (Two-star Michelin Madrid chefs Sergi Arola and David Muñoz were, in fact, a rock musician and a footballer, respectively.) And the chefs challenge each

flamenco: WHOM TO HEAR

Flamenco has undergone such a resurgence in Spain that it has again become the dominant form of popular music, finally pushing American dance pop and its Spanish imitators off the Spanish charts. Here are some musicians who have shaped the current scene and whose recordings are part of the essential flamenco collection.

Pepe Habichuela (b. 1944)
A product of Granada's Gypsy community, this virtuoso guitarist and band leader is known for his highly emotional style and his readiness to collaborate with other musical traditions (Indian, Arabic, and jazz).

Paco de Lucía (b. 1947)
This virtuoso guitarist from Algeciras was a child prodigy who began touring at age 11 with José Greco. One of the musicians who launched the revival of flamenco, he is the acknowledged technical and stylistic master of the modern flamenco guitar.

Camarón de la Isla (1950–92)
A Gypsy from San Fernando (near Algeciras), Camarón vaulted from singing at bus stops to stardom at age 16, recording 10 albums with Paco de Lucía. His wrenching emotional style set a benchmark for modern flamenco singing.

Carmen Linares (b. 1951)
The leading female flamenco singer of her generation, her encyclopedic repertoire embraces virtually all styles and forms of flamenco. She is a popular recording and television star.

Concha Buika (b. 1972)
Born in Palma de Mallorca and raised in a Gypsy neighborhood, Buika is of sub-Saharan African descent and even worked as a Tina Turner impersonator in Las Vegas casinos. Her flamenco style blends traditional *coplas* (meter) with elements of jazz, soul, and pop music.

Radio Tarifa
Controversial for their "reinvented" style of Arabic-Hispanic-Sephardic music pre-1492, this lively trio formed in the late 1990s performs fusion music as programmed by their imagined radio station on the Straits of Gibraltar. Their tunes can be heard booming from open windows all over Andalucía.

Taberna - Resta
Casa Pa
Flamenco en

NEW museums FOR A NEW SPAIN

As Spain sought to recapture its cultural momentum after the Franco stagnation, the country began constructing cultural institutions at an unprecedented rate. Here are a few of the most significant:

- **Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Mérida (p. 241).** Designed by Rafael Moneo, this radical new museum of Roman art was inaugurated in 1986 and later won a prize as the most significant public building in Spain from 1983 to 1993. When excavation for the building uncovered a section of Roman road, Moneo incorporated it into the design as an exhibit.
- **Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Nacional de Reina Sofía, Madrid (p. 90).** The national museum of 20th-century and contemporary art opened in 1992 in an 18th-century former hospital altered by the addition of three glass towers designed by Ian Ritchie. In 2005, the modern addition by Jean Nouvel opened.
- **Museo Thyssen-Bornamisza, Madrid (p. 91)**. Opened in 1992 in the 18th-century Palacio Villahermosa, the acquisition of this seminal private collection of art was seen as a coup for Spain and a vote of confidence in Madrid's continued importance in the art world.
- **Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (p. 624).** Designed by Frank O. Gehry, this contemporary art museum changed the way the world looked at Bilbao when it opened in 1997. It also changed the way Bilbao regarded itself.
- **City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia (p. 405).** This complex was designed principally by Santiago Calatrava, with the largest aquarium in Europe designed by Félix Candela. Inaugurated in 1998 with the opening of L'Hemisferic planetarium and the IMAX theater, it was completed with the debut of the opera house, El Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía, in 2005. It is Valencia's rejoinder to Bilbao's Guggenheim.
- **Museo del Prado extension, Madrid (p. 87).** Completed at the end of 2006, this complex extension of the 18th-century building that had long housed the Prado Museum more than doubled the space of the museum while incorporating the Jerónimos Cloister that had stood behind the original structure. Much of the new space is underground, and the unassuming modern building carefully avoids upstaging the neoclassical original.

other to constantly improve. Madrid Fusion, held annually, is a world summit of chefs who trade information on what's hot and what's new around the globe. Often as not, the "new" comes from somewhere in Spain.

Spaniards increasingly imitate the Basques, who feel they must save up to eat at least once a year at a truly great restaurant. Yet not all the great dining in Spain costs 150€ and up—before wine. The trickle-down of culinary aspiration reaches all the way to Spain's bars, where complex and inventive tapas, called *tapas creativas,* are all the rage. Many cities around Spain hold annual competitions that draw dozens of, and sometimes a hundred or more, participating bars. The real winners are diners.

In a way, Spain's coming-out parties to the world were Expo '92 in Sevilla and the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. The latter spurred the transformation of its host city, completely overhauling the waterfront and heralding Barcelona's reemergence on the world stage. Because the Expo was segregated from downtown Sevilla, that city saw fewer direct changes, but Spain signaled to the world its intentions to modernize by feverishly developing its first high-speed rail line to connect Sevilla and Madrid in less than 2½ hours.

Spanish exuberance was tempered shortly after the turn of the millennium by outbreaks of terrorist violence, including Al Qaeda exploding 10 bombs on four trains going into Madrid's Atocha station from the suburbs, killing 191 passengers and injuring 1,800 in March 2004. A year earlier, the violent Basque separatist group ETA exploded several bombs in Madrid and at vacation resorts. The campaign was part of ETA's insistence on an independent Basque homeland in northern Spain and southwest France. In late 2011, however, the Basque group declared a permanent cease-fire at an event that brought in such international figures as Gerry Adams, who had foresworn IRA violence in Ireland, and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. The cease-fire cleared the way for even more tourism to the region. Any visitor wanting to understand the dynamics of Basque culture and nationalism should read Mark Kurlansky's *The Basque History of the World.*

The first decade of the 21st century also ushered in a slew of social changes. In March 2002, Spain officially abandoned its time-honored *peseta* and went under the euro umbrella, to the consternation of many Spaniards and widespread complaints about price gouging. In what some Spaniards saw as an assault on their lifestyle—even their identity—Spain came under increasing pressure to conform to short lunch breaks like those in the other E.U. countries. What? No 3-hour siesta? It was heresy. Despite opposition, large companies began to cut lunch to 2 hours. Pro-siesta forces in Spain cited the American custom of "power naps" as reason to retain their beloved afternoon break.

The traditional siesta was buffeted as the country's economy expanded, with jobs on the upswing. Even with the recent downturn in the economy, the siesta doesn't appear to be making a comeback in urban areas, although the afternoon closing of businesses still prevails in the warmest parts of the country. A survey revealed that only 25% of Spaniards still take the siesta. More and more families are moving to the suburbs, and more women are joining the workforce. Visitors should not cave to E.U. peer pressure and should continue to observe the quintessentially Spanish practice of the prolonged lunch.

In 2004, Spaniards rebuffed the ruling conservative Popular Party and turned to a Socialist government. Upon taking office in April, the new Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero vowed to institute deep changes in social issues after 8 years of conservative rule. On the day he was confirmed as prime minister, he endorsed gay marriage. In approving the resolution in April 2005, the Spanish Parliament became the third European country to recognize gay marriage, after the Netherlands and Belgium. In practice, post-Franco Spain is an especially attractive destination for LGBT travelers, and some resort towns like Sitges on the coast south of Barcelona are at least as gay as they are straight during the height of the tourist season. Other popular resort areas for gay travelers are Torremolinos on the Costa del Sol and the island of Ibiza. Most major cities have a fairly vibrant gay nightlife.

TOP 10 souvenirs OF SPAIN

1. **A tin of saffron.** In most countries, it is hard to find saffron in anything larger than 1 gram vials. In Spanish markets or specialty shops, you can buy it in containers of 5, 10, 20, and even 50 grams. It's still a splurge, but much less expensive than buying it at home.
2. **An embroidered shawl from Andalucía.** While you're in Sevilla, observe local women to learn how this accessory can become a major fashion statement.
3. **A Basque beret.** More structured than the French beret, a Basque beret is usually made of waterproof wool with a soft leather headband. Ideally, it should be purchased in Basque Country from a man who never takes his off.
4. **A ceramic olive serving bowl** with a separate small compartment for placing the pits. Some also have another compartment to hold toothpicks. It will be a great conversation piece at your next dinner party.
5. **A beautiful forged kitchen knife from Toledo.** Toledo steel has been the standard to swear by since knights carried Toledo blades into battle in the Crusades. Blade makers in Toledo now make fabulous kitchen cutlery. Be sure to pack your purchase into a checked bag to fly home.
6. **A bullfight poster.** Any souvenir shop will print your name on a generic poster. Instead, go to the gift shop at any major bullring for exquisite reproductions of posters from recent seasons. A proper bullfight poster is a uniquely Spanish art genre.
7. **A Lladro porcelain figurine.** The firm is a 20th-century invention but the style harks back to the fine workmanship of 18th-century porcelain.
8. **Canvas espadrilles with rope soles.** This summer classic never goes out of style, and Spaniards make them in both casual and high-fashion editions.
9. **Team jersey from Barcelona FC or Real Madrid.** Football (soccer) is practically a state religion, and these two teams are the most popular in Spain and among the best in the world. State your preference with your jersey.
10. **Paella pan.** They're so flat and thin (see picture below) that they easily slip into a suitcase. Now you can use that saffron.

In 2008, Zapatero won another term as prime minister, although with a smaller margin of the vote than before. He revealed plans to invest in Spain's future—education, research, biotechnology, and renewable energy—to dig the country out of its financial hole. As in the rest of the world, Spain's economic growth slowed sharply in 2009, as many of its companies faced financial turmoil.

Spain's efforts to rein in its economic woes began to pay dividends in late 2011, as the country found it could float bonds at reasonable interest rates. It benefited, no doubt, by comparison with Greece, whose economy had collapsed almost entirely. But glimmers of hope were not enough for the electorate, who returned Mariano Rajoy's center-right Popular Party to power after an 8-year absence.

Perhaps the most radical sign that Spain had embraced Europe came in 2011, when bowing to E.U. health policies, smoking was banned in all bars and restaurants throughout the country. Since Spaniards were among the heaviest smokers in Europe, observers predicted that the law was bound to fail. On the contrary, it is generally respected as Spaniards discover how good food tastes without a side of second-hand smoke.

Ironically, the smoking ban and the ongoing economic crisis have not diminished Spain's lively bar scene. Smokers simply pop out to the street for a smoke before coming back inside to eat and drink, and the crunch on personal income has meant a proliferation of the *especial de crisis* meal—a bargain plate for impecunious times.

WHEN TO GO

Spring and fall are ideal times to visit nearly all of Spain, with the possible exception of the Atlantic coast, which experiences heavy rains in October and November. May and October are the best months, in terms of both weather and crowds.

In summer, it's hot, hot, and hotter still, with the cities in Castilla (Madrid) and Andalucía (Sevilla and Córdoba) heating up the most. Madrid has dry heat; the average temperature can hover around 76°F (24°C) in July and 69°F (21°C) in September. Sevilla has the dubious reputation of being about the hottest part of Spain in July and August, often baking under average temperatures of 97°F (36°C).

Average Daily Temperature & Monthly Rainfall for Spain

BARCELONA	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
TEMP. (°F)	48	49	52	55	61	68	73	73	70	63	55	50
TEMP. (°C)	9	9	11	13	16	20	23	23	21	17	13	10
RAINFALL (IN.)	1.7	1.4	1.9	2.0	2.2	1.5	.9	1.6	3.1	3.7	2.9	2.0
BILBAO												
TEMP. (°F)	45	48	51	52	55	65	67	67	61	53	52	48
TEMP. (°C)	7	9	11	11	13	18	19	19	16	12	11	9
RAINFALL (IN.)	.9	.8	.9	1.3	1.5	1.2	.6	.7	1.0	1.2	1.4	.8
MADRID												
TEMP. (°F)	42	45	49	53	60	69	76	75	69	58	48	43
TEMP. (°C)	6	7	9	12	16	21	24	24	21	14	9	6
RAINFALL (IN.)	1.6	1.8	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.0	.3	.4	1.1	1.5	2.3	1.7
SEVILLA												
TEMP. (°F)	59	63	68	75	81	90	97	97	90	79	68	61
TEMP. (°C)	15	17	20	24	27	32	36	36	32	26	20	16
RAINFALL (IN.)	2.6	2.4	3.6	2.3	1.6	.3	0	.2	.8	2.8	2.7	3.2

Barcelona, cooler in temperature, is often quite humid. Midsummer temperatures in Mallorca often reach 91°F (33°C). The overcrowded Costa Brava has temperatures around 81°F (27°C) in July and August. The Costa del Sol has an average of 77°F (25°C) in summer. The coolest spot in Spain is the Atlantic coast from San Sebastián to A Coruña, with temperatures in the 70s (21°–26°C) in July and August.

August remains the major vacation month in Europe. The traffic from France, the Netherlands, and Germany to Spain becomes a veritable migration, and low-cost hotels along the coastal areas are virtually impossible to find. To compound the problem, many restaurants and shops also decide it's time for a vacation, thereby limiting visitors' selections for both dining and shopping.

In winter, the coast from Algeciras to Málaga is the most popular, with temperatures reaching a warm 60° to 63°F (16°–17°C). Madrid gets cold, as low as 34°F (1°C). Mallorca is warmer, usually in the 50s (low teens Celsius), but it often dips into the 40s (single digits Celsius). Some mountain resorts can experience extreme cold.

HOLIDAYS Holidays include January 1 (New Year's Day), January 6 (Feast of the Epiphany), March 19 (Feast of St. Joseph), Good Friday, Easter Monday, May 1 (May Day), June 10 (Corpus Christi), June 29 (Feast of the Assumption), October 12 (Spain's National Day), November 1 (All Saints' Day), December 8 (Immaculate Conception), and December 25 (Christmas).

No matter how large or small, every city or town in Spain also celebrates its local saint's day. In Madrid it's May 15 (St. Isidro). You'll rarely know what the local holidays are in your next destination in Spain. Try to keep money on hand, because you may arrive in town only to find banks and stores closed. In some cases, intercity bus services are suspended on holidays.

Spain Calendar of Events

The dates given below may not be precise. Sometimes the exact days are not announced until 6 weeks before the actual festival. Check with the Tourist Office of Spain (p. 764) if you plan to attend a specific event.

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check http://events.frommers.com, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

JANUARY

Granada Reconquest Festival, Granada. The whole city celebrates the Christians' victory over the Moors in 1492. The highest tower at the Alhambra is open to the public on January 2. For information, contact the Tourist Office of Granada (www.turgranada.es; ✆ **95-824-71-28**). January 2.

Día de los Reyes (Three Kings Day), throughout Spain. Parades are held around the country on the eve of the Festival of the Epiphany. Various "kings" dispense candy to all the kids. January 6.

Día de San Antonio (St. Anthony's Day), La Puebla, Mallorca. Bonfires, dancing, revelers dressed as devils, and other riotous events honor St. Anthony on the eve of his day. January 17.

Gastrofestival, Madrid. While top international chefs gather for Madrid Fusion, restaurants and tapas bars offer special menus and treats. Cooking tours and demos are held; museums and galleries host food-themed films and programs. For more information, visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36.** Last week of January, first week of February.

FEBRUARY

Bocairent Festival of Christians and Moors, Bocairent (Valencia). Fireworks, colorful costumes, parades, and a reenactment of the struggle between Christians and Moors mark this exuberant festival. A stuffed effigy of Mohammed is blown to bits. Visit www.comunitatvalenciana.com or call ✆ **96-290-50-62** for more information. First week of February.

ARCO (Madrid's International Contemporary Art Fair), Madrid. One of the biggest draws on Spain's cultural calendar, this exhibit showcases the best in contemporary art from Europe, the Americas, Australia, and Asia. Held at the Feria de Madrid exhibition complex, tickets are 30€ to 66€. For more information, go to www.ifema.es or call ✆ **91-722-30-00.** Dates vary, but the event usually takes place mid-February.

Festival de Jerez. This annual flamenco festival highlights Jerez's role in the development of the art. Performance venues range from intimate bars to enthusiasts' clubs to large stage shows, usually featuring major figures. Guitar, singing, and dance workshops are held. Visit www.festivaldejerez.es or call ✆ **90-210-12-12** for tickets. Late February through early March.

Madrid Carnaval. The carnival kicks off with a big parade along Paseo de la Castellana, culminating in a masked ball at the Círculo de Bellas Artes on the following night. Fancy-dress competitions last until Ash Wednesday, when the festivities end with a tear-jerking "burial of a sardine" at the Fuente de los Pajaritos in the Casa de Campo. This is followed that evening by a concert in the Plaza Mayor. Visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36** for more information. Dates vary. Normally 40 days before Easter.

Carnavales de Cádiz. The oldest and best-attended carnival in Spain, held in Cádiz, is a freewheeling event full of costumes, parades, strolling troubadours, and drum beating. Visit www.carnavaldecadiz.com or call ✆ **62-933-28-40** for more information. Early February or early March.

MARCH

Fallas de Valencia. Dating from the 1400s, this fiesta centers on the burning of papier-mâché effigies of winter demons. Burnings are preceded by bullfights, fireworks, and parades. For more information, visit www.fallasfromvalencia.com or call ✆ **96-352-17-30.** Early to mid-March.

Semana Santa (Holy Week), Sevilla. Although many of the country's smaller towns stage similar celebrations (especially notable in Zamora and Cuenca), the festivities in Sevilla are by far the most elaborate. From Palm Sunday until Easter Sunday, processions of hooded penitents move to the piercing wail of the *saeta,* a love song to the Virgin or Christ, as they carry *pasos,* heavy floats bearing images of the Virgin or Christ, through the streets. Make hotel reservations way in advance. Visit www.turismosevilla.org or call the Sevilla Office of Tourism for details (✆ **95-448-68-00**). The week before Easter.

APRIL

Feria de Sevilla (Sevilla Fair). This is the most celebrated week of revelry in all of Spain, with all-night flamenco dancing, entertainment booths, bullfights, horseback riding, flower-decked coaches, and dancing in the streets. You'll need to reserve a hotel early for this one. For general information and exact festival dates, visit www.turismosevilla.org or call the Sevilla Office of Tourism for details (✆ **95-448-68-00**). Second week after Easter.

Moros y Cristianos (Moors and Christians), Alcoy, near Alicante. During 3 days every April, the centuries-old battle between the Moors and the Christians is restaged with soldiers in period costumes. Naturally, the Christians who drove the Moors from Spain always win. The simulated fighting takes on almost a circuslike flair, and the costumes worn by the Moors are always absurd and anachronistic. Visit www.alicantecongresos.com or call ✆ **96-514-34-52** for more information. Late April.

MAY

Feria del Caballo, Jerez de la Frontera. This annual livestock fair, held here since the 13th century, focuses on the famous Andalucían standard breed developed by Carthuisan monks. It features 5 days of equestrian events, parades, flamenco, and livestock displays, and, of course, sherry drinking. For information, visit www.turismojerez.com or call ✆ **95-614-98-63.** Mid-May.

Festival de los Patios, Córdoba. At this famous fair, residents decorate their patios with cascades of flowers. Visitors wander from patio to patio. Visit www.amigosdelospatioscordobeses.es or call ✆ **95-735-51-79** for more information. First 2 weeks of May.

Fiesta de San Isidro, Madrid. Madrileños run wild with a 10-day celebration honoring their city's patron saint. Food fairs, Castilian folkloric events, street parades, parties, music, dances, bullfights, and other festivities mark the occasion. Make hotel reservations early. Expect crowds and traffic (and beware of pickpockets). Visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36** for more information. Mid-May.

Romería del Rocío (Pilgrimage of the Virgin of the Dew), El Rocío (Huelva). The most famous pilgrimage in Andalucía attracts a million people. Fifty men carry the statue of the Virgin 15km (9⅓ miles) to Almonte for consecration. Third week of May.

JUNE

Corpus Christi, all over Spain. A major holiday on the Spanish calendar, this event is marked by big processions, especially in Toledo, Málaga, Sevilla, and Granada. June 2.

Veranos de la Villa, Madrid. This program presents folkloric dancing, pop music, classical music, *zarzuelas,* and flamenco at venues throughout the city. Open-air cinema is a feature in the Parque del Retiro. Ask at the tourist office for complete details. (The program changes every summer.) Sometimes admission is charged, but often these events are free. Visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36** for more information. Mid-June until the end of August.

International Music and Dance Festival, Granada. Since 1952, Granada's prestigious program of dance and music has attracted international artists who perform at the Alhambra and other venues. It's a major event on Europe's cultural calendar. Reserve well in advance. For a complete schedule and tickets, contact El Festival Internacional de Música y Danza de Granada (www.granadafestival.org; ✆ **95-822-18-44**). Last week of June to first week of July.

Las Hogueras de San Juan (St. John's Bonfires), Alicante. Bonfires blaze through the night to honor the summer solstice, just as they did in Celtic and Roman times. The bonfire signals the launching of 5 days of gala celebrations with fireworks and parades. Business in Alicante comes to a standstill. Visit www.hoguerassanjuan.com or call ✆ **98-120-24-06** for more information. June 20–24.

Verbena de Sant Joan, Barcelona. This traditional festival occupies all Cataláns. Barcelona literally lights up—with fireworks, bonfires, and dances until dawn. The highlight of the festival is the fireworks show at Montjuïc. For more information, visit www.gencat.net or call ✆ **93-238-80-91.** Late June.

JULY

A Rapa das Bestas (The Capture of the Beasts), San Lorenzo de Sabucedo, Galicia. Spain's greatest horse roundup attracts equestrian lovers from throughout Europe. Horses in the verdant hills of northwestern Spain are rounded up, branded, and medically checked before their release into the wild again. For more information, visit www.turgalicia.es or call ✆ **98-154-63-51.** First weekend in July.

Festival of St. James, Santiago de Compostela. Pomp and ceremony mark this annual pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James the Apostle in Galicia. Galician folklore shows, concerts, parades, and the swinging of the *botafumeiro* (a mammoth incense burner) mark the event. For more information, visit www.turgalicia.es or call ✆ **98-154-63-51.** July 15–30.

Fiesta de San Fermín, Pamplona. Vividly described in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*, the running of the bulls through the streets of Pamplona is the most popular celebration in Spain. It includes wine tasting, fireworks, and, of course, bullfights. Reserve many months in advance. For more information, such as a list of accommodations, contact the Office of Tourism, Calle Eslava 1, 31002 Pamplona (www.sanfermin.com; ✆ **84-842-04-20**). July 6–14.

San Sebastián Jazz Festival, San Sebastián. Celebrating its 47th year in 2012, this festival brings the jazz greats of the world together in the Kursaal. Other programs take place alfresco at the Plaza de Trinidad in the Old Quarter. The Office of the San Sebastián Jazz Festival (www.heinekenjazzaldia.com; ✆ **94-348-19-00**) can provide schedules and tickets. Late July.

AUGUST

Santander International Festival of Music and Dance, Santander. The repertoire includes classical music, ballet, contemporary dance, chamber music, and recitals. Most performances are staged in the Palacio de Festivales, a centrally located auditorium custom-built for this event. For further information, contact Festival Internacional de Santander (www.festivalsantander.com; ✆ **94-221-05-08**). Throughout August.

Fiestas of Lavapiés and La Paloma, Madrid. These two fiestas begin with the Lavapiés on August 1 and continue through the hectic La Paloma celebration on August 15, the Day of the Virgen de la Paloma. During the fiestas, thousands of people race through the narrow streets. Apartment dwellers hurl buckets of cold water onto the crowds below to cool them off. There are children's games, floats, music, flamenco, and *zarzuelas*, along with street fairs. Visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36** for more information. Two weeks in early August.

Misteri d'Elx (Mystery of Elche). This sacred drama is reenacted in the 17th-century Basilica of Santa María in Elche (near Alicante). It represents the Assumption and the Crowning of the Virgin. For tickets, call the Office of Tourism in Elche (www.visitelche.com; ✆ **96-665-81-95**). August 11–15.

Feria de Málaga (Málaga Fair). One of the longest summer fairs in southern Europe (generally lasting 10 days), this celebration kicks off with fireworks displays and is highlighted by a parade of Arabian horses pulling brightly decorated carriages. Participants are dressed in colorful Andalucían garb. Plazas rattle with castanets, and wine is dispensed by the gallon. For more information, contact the Málaga Office of Tourism (www.malagaturismo.com; ✆ **95-192-62-20**). Always the weekend before August 19.

La Tomatina (Battle of the Tomatoes), Buñol (Valencia). This is one of the most photographed festivals in Spain, growing in popularity every year. Truckloads of tomatoes are shipped into Buñol, where they become vegetable missiles between warring towns and villages. Portable showers are brought in for the cleanup, followed by music for dancing and singing. For information, visit www.turismobunol.com or call ✆ **96-250-38-86.** Last Wednesday in August.

SEPTEMBER

Diada de Catalunya, Barcelona. This is the most significant festival in Catalunya. It celebrates the region's autonomy from the rest of Spain, following years of repression under the dictator Franco. Demonstrations and other flag-waving events take place. The *senyera,* the flag of Catalunya, is everywhere. Not your typical tourist fare, but interesting. For more information, visit www.gencat.net or call ✆ **93-238-80-91.** September 11.

San Sebastián International Film Festival. The premier film festival of Spain takes place in the Basque capital, often at several different theaters. Retrospectives are frequently featured, and weeklong screenings are held. For more information, visit www.sansebastianfestival.com or call ✆ **94-348-12-12.** Second week in September.

Fiestas de la Merced, Barcelona. This celebration honors Nostra Senyora de la Merced, the city's patron saint, known for her compassion for animals. Beginning after dark, and after a Mass in the Iglesia de la Merced, a procession of as many as 50 "animals" (humans dressed like tigers, lions, and horses) proceeds with lots of firecrackers and sparklers to the Cathedral of Santa Eulalia, and then on to Plaza de Sant Jaume, and eventually into Les Rambles, Plaza de Catalunya, and the harborfront. For more information, visit www.gencat.net or call ✆ **93-238-80-91.** Mid-September.

OCTOBER

St. Teresa Week, Ávila. *Verbenas* (carnivals), parades, singing, and dancing honor the patron saint of this walled city. October 8–15.

Autumn Festival, Madrid. Spanish and international artists participate in this cultural program, with a series of operatic, ballet, dance, music, and theatrical performances from Strasbourg to Tokyo. This event is a premier attraction, yet tickets are reasonably priced. Make hotel reservations early. Visit www.esmadrid.com or call ✆ **91-588-16-36** for more information. Late October to late November.

NOVEMBER

All Saints' Day, all over Spain. This public holiday is reverently celebrated, as relatives and friends lay flowers on the graves of the dead. November 1.

DECEMBER

Día de los Santos Inocentes, all over Spain. This equivalent of April Fools' Day gives people an excuse to do *loco* things. December 28.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Ecotourism took off in Spain in the '90s and has been gaining in popularity ever since. Growing numbers of visitors are opting for organized ecotours or else incorporating environmental awareness into their vacations in Spain.

Spain established its first national park in 1918. Today, there are 14 national parks, including Europe's largest, **Los Picos de Europa** (p. 647), which is in Asturias in northern Spain. Spain's national parks—called *parques nacionales*—incorporate everything from wetlands to mountains, and receive almost 10 million visitors per year. For more information visit **http://reddeparquesnacionales.mma.es**.

Ecotourism often takes the form of camping at one of the 1,000 sites in Spain, or within accommodations that include everything from basic government-rated one-star sites to more comfortable four-star settings. Some of the

MAKING THE MOST OF meals

Eating and drinking are more than mere sustenance—they are the still points around which the Spanish day revolves. The famous late Spanish dinner is simply an accommodation for the ferocious heat of summer that calls for whiling away the afternoon with lunch. In practice, Spaniards eat four meals a day, sometimes supplemented by a sweet afternoon *merienda*, or coffee break, of pastry.

BREAKFAST

The Spanish day starts with *desayuno,* a continental breakfast of coffee, hot chocolate, or tea, with assorted rolls, butter, and jam. Spanish breakfast might also consist of *churros* (fried doughnut sticks) and very sweet, thick hot chocolate. Most Spaniards drink strong coffee with hot milk: either a *café con leche* (half coffee, half milk) or *cortado* (a shot of espresso "cut" with a dash of milk). If you find it too intense, ask for a *café americano,* which is diluted with boiling water.

LUNCH

Typically the big meal of the day, the *almuerzo* can be as hearty as a farm-style midday "dinner" in the United States. Such lunches include three or four courses, beginning either with soup or hors d'oeuvres called *entremeses.* A main dish might be fish or egg, or more likely meat with vegetables. Wine is always part of the meal. Dessert is usually pastry or flan, followed by coffee. Lunch is served from 1 to 4pm, with "rush hour" at 2pm.

TAPAS

After work or an early evening stroll, many Spaniards visit their favorite bars to drink wine or beer and eat small plates known as tapas. These range from trays of olives or a few pickled anchovies or *jamón serrano* (see photo) to exquisite small composed plates that mimic fancy restaurant dishes.

DINNER

Depending on the size of your lunch, the *cena* can also be a big meal with multiple courses. But if you've indulged in a big lunch and lots of tapas, it's quite acceptable to order a lighter meal—perhaps some cold cuts, sausage, a bowl of soup, or even a Spanish potato omelet. Many European and American visitors skip dinner altogether in favor of more time at the tapas bars. The chic dining hour, even in rural areas, is 10 or 10:30pm, but service usually begins by 9:30pm.

SPANISH treats

The breadth of Spain means many regional specialty dishes, and the radical improvements in the Spanish wine industry means there are more choices than ever to drink with them. Here are some pairings of classic dishes with great Spanish wines.

Cochinillo asado (roast suckling pig) is served all over Spain but is a specialty of old Castilla, notably Segovia. Drink a **light red from the DO Bierzo region** in northwest Castilla y León. These wines are vinted mainly from the Mencia and Garnacha Tintorera grapes.

Paella Valenciana is also served all over Spain, though rarely is it the real deal. If you find a great paella Valenciana, eat it accompanied by a bracing white from the **DO Valencia** region or a Macabeo-chardonnay white from **DO Utiel-Requena.**

Bacalao al pil-pil (codfish served with *pil-pil* sauce, an emulsion of olive oil, fish juices, garlic, and parsley) is a quintessential Basque dish. The perfect complement is a quintessential Basque wine, the bracing and acidic *txakolí* from **DO Bizkaiko Txakolina.**

Merluza al horno (roasted hake) is another ubiquitous, reliable dish. We like to drink white wines with it, either a **DO Rueda** (preferably 100% Verdejo grape) or a brisker, more aromatic **DO Rias Baixas** based on the Albariño grape.

Pulpo Galego (octopus with boiled potatoes and paprika) is a specialty of Galicia but is popular around Spain. We find it pairs very well with a **white DOC Rioja** based on Viura and Sauvignon Blanc.

Suquet is a Catalán fish stew. Some of the best we've ever tasted came from the Empordà district on the Costa Brava, and they are delicious with a **DO Empordà white** based on the Garnacha Blanca grape.

Chuleton de buey is a whole beef rib grilled, often over an open wood flame. Accompany it with an **aged red DOC Rioja,** probably based on Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo, or with a **red DOC Priorat.**

Chuletillas de cordero are tiny baby lamb chops, a specialty of Navarra. The same region was one of Spain's first great medieval wine regions and is quickly becoming one of the 21st century's great districts. A **red DO Navarra** based on Granacha Tinta grapes, often blended with Merlot, pairs perfectly with the lamb.

Gambas al ajillo are sweet shrimp grilled in the shells with olive oil and garlic. Their perfect accompaniment is a lightly chilled glass of sherry from **DO Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda.**

campsites even rent mobile homes or bungalows. Tourist offices throughout Spain will provide data directing you to Spain's many official campgrounds, called *parques de campismo.* **Vayacamping** (www.vayacamping.net; ✆ **93-594-61-00**) publishes guides and maintains a website, detailing camping possibilities throughout Spain.

For a comprehensive list of Spain's ecotours and vacations, check out **Info Hub** (www.infohub.com), the most comprehensive guide to out-of-the-ordinary and inspiring travel ideas in Spain. The layout of the site steers you toward the style of tour that appeals to you and then guides you to the specific website associated with the tour you want.

Highlights include self-guided trekking through the Spanish Pyrenees, flights in hot-air balloons, cycling in northern Spain, cycling in Catalunya, and birding tours through swamps and wetlands.

Ecoforest Education for Sustainability strives for minimal damage to the planet's ecosystem. The group sets up communities where participants can live, learn, and visit in a healthy, sustainable way. All food comes from vegan-organic agriculture. Ecoforest defines its locations as "paradise gardens," where volunteers can sustain themselves in ways that not only are eco-friendly, but will enhance the environment for generations to come. For additional details, contact Ecoforest Education for Sustainability, Apt. 29, Coin 29100, Málaga (www.ecoforest.org; ✆ **66-107-99-50**).

If you'd like to travel green in Spain, staying at environmentally sensitive hotels, seek out recommendations from **It's a Green Green World** (www.itsagreengreenworld.com). Its site previews green hotels across Spain, from a *finca* (farmhouse hotel) on the island of Mallorca to a small country *posada* surrounded by its own 8-hectare (20-acre) organic farm in Asturias, in northwestern Spain.

Among international chains that have taken the lead in ecotourism in Spain is **InterContinental Hotels and Resorts.** It encourages its member hotels to choose methods of operation that will be the least damaging to the environment. They refer to their policies on this as the "reduce, reuse, or recycle" principal.

Travelers can make a difference in the conservation of Spain's natural habitats by learning about environmentally responsible tourism before they go. For information on the subject, contact one of the following organizations: **Conservation International,** 2011 Crystal Dr., Ste. 500, Arlington, VA 22202 (www.conservation.org; ✆ **800/429-5660** or 703/341-2400); **The International Ecotourism Society,** P.O. Box 96503 #34145, Washington, DC 20090 (www.ecotourism.org; ✆ **202/506-5033**); or the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),** 39 Quai André Citroën, Paris 75739, in France (www.unep.org; ✆ **33-1-44-37-14-50**). If you have time to contact only one of these organizations, make it the International Ecotourism Society, the world's oldest and largest ecotourism organization.

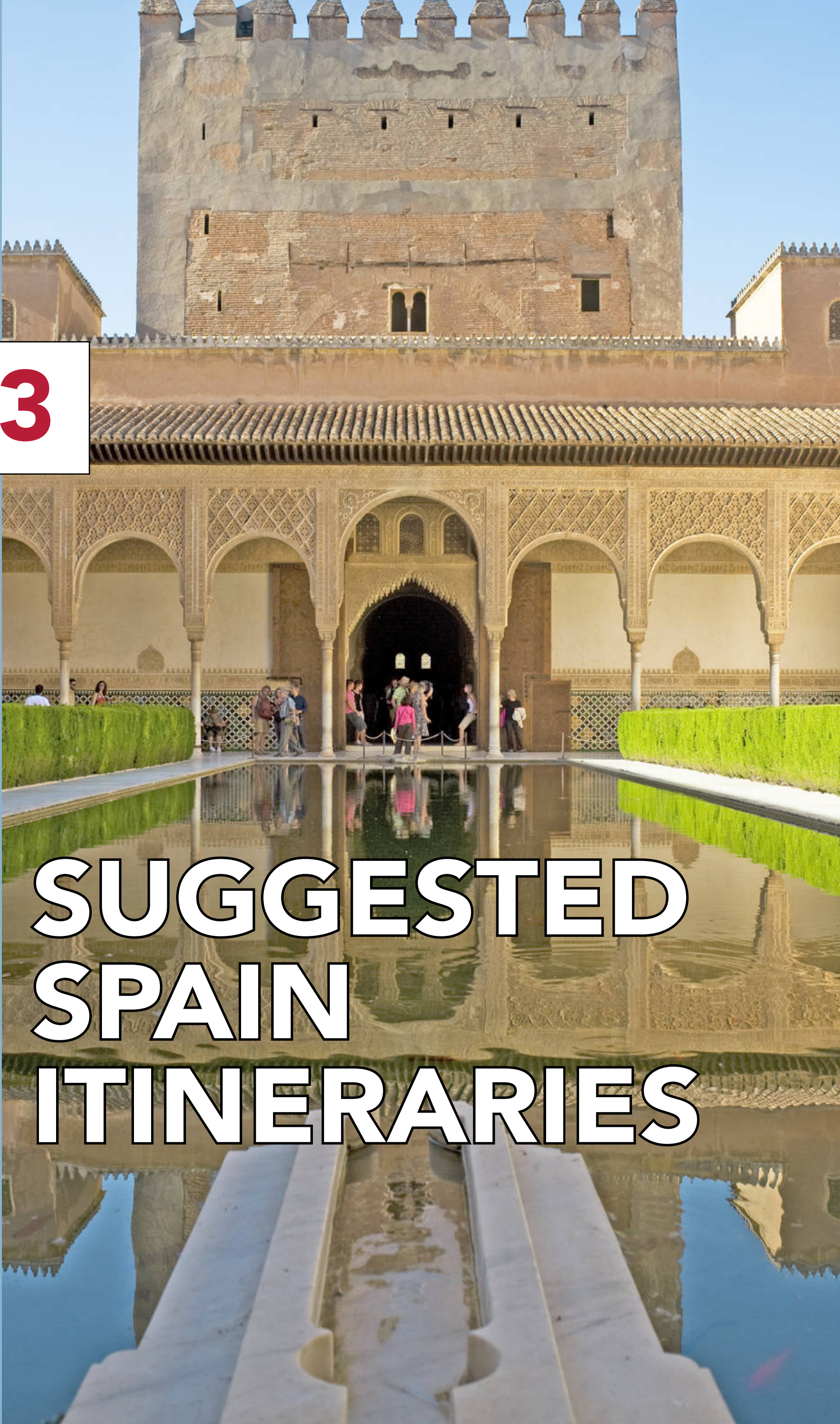
An admirable organization for the ecotourist is **Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics,** P.O. Box 997, Boulder CO 80306 (www.lnt.org). It has drawn up a code for outdoor travelers who want to protect the wilderness for future generations, with the aim to reduce one's impact on the environment.

While in Spain, consider one of the tours with low environmental impact, such as walking, biking, or horseback riding.

For a list of even more sustainable resources, as well as tips and explanations on how to travel greener, visit **www.frommers.com/planning**.

3

SUGGESTED SPAIN ITINERARIES



It would be a delight to get "lost" in Spain, wandering about at your leisure, discovering unspoiled villages off the beaten path. Indeed, we highly recommend this approach. But we also recognize that few of us have enough time (or money) for an unstructured love affair with a country. A schedule lets you get the most out of the available time, and just because you have a point of departure doesn't mean that serendipity and surprise can't intervene from time to time.

Plan on using several kinds of transportation. The expressways crisscrossing Spain are impressive, well maintained, and convenient, although toll roads can be surprisingly expensive. Driving between destinations is easy. Parking is not. Most vehicles are too big for the donkey-cart streets in ancient villages, and city parking may cost more than the daily car rental. Because Spain is big, it's worth covering long distances either by plane or, except in the north, by high-speed train. Spain is a world leader in fast trains, and even more lines are on the way. You can take a train from Madrid to Barcelona nearly as fast as going to the airport and waiting to get through security. In practice, you'll end up using trains, planes, buses, *and* rental cars for maximum convenience and efficiency on most itineraries.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SPAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Spain is so large and so diverse that it's hard to think of hitting all the highlights in just 2 weeks. But this tour strikes most of the notes in the Spanish chord, beginning in majestic Madrid, getting a taste of old Castilla y León, bopping into Basque country, and heading to stylish and vibrant Catalunya. And that's just the first week. If you're limited to a week, cut the trip short after Barcelona, and plan a return trip to finish the circuit with lyrical Valencia, Moorish Granada, electrifying Sevilla, and the distant Roman outpost of Mérida in far-flung Extremadura. All your travel is on RENFE trains, making a Eurail Spain Pass an economical way to go.

DAYS 1 & 2: Madrid ★★★

Madrid was a backwater until Felipe II moved the capital here in 1561. For the next 450 years, Spain's power and glory was concentrated in the **Palacio Real** (p.83). The current palace testifies to the ornate taste of the Bourbon kings. If kids are along, don't miss the suits of armor in the Armory. Royal males had a shot at inheriting the palace. Their sisters often took the veil, many of them at the nearby **Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales** (p. 83), and they brought their prized paintings, tapestries, and other art with them. Enjoy a late afternoon drink and people-watching on **Plaza Mayor** (p. 82).

On your second day, pick up the pace and spend the morning at the **Museo del Prado** (p. 87), one of the top museums of European art.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Patio de los Arrayanes at the Alhambra.**

The Museo del Prado in Madrid is worth the wait in line.

Concentrate on Spanish masters. Velázquez fills galleries 12, 14 to 16, and 18, while Goya occupies galleries 66, 67, 85, and 90 to 94. The Prado came late to El Greco, whose works are in galleries 9A and 10A. After a quick lunch, you're ready for modern times at the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (p. 90). The best works are by modern Spanish masters: Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Juan Gris, Antoni Tapies, and, of course, Picasso, best represented by *Guernica.* Spend the early evening on a tapas-crawl on **Plaza Santa Ana** (p. 78).

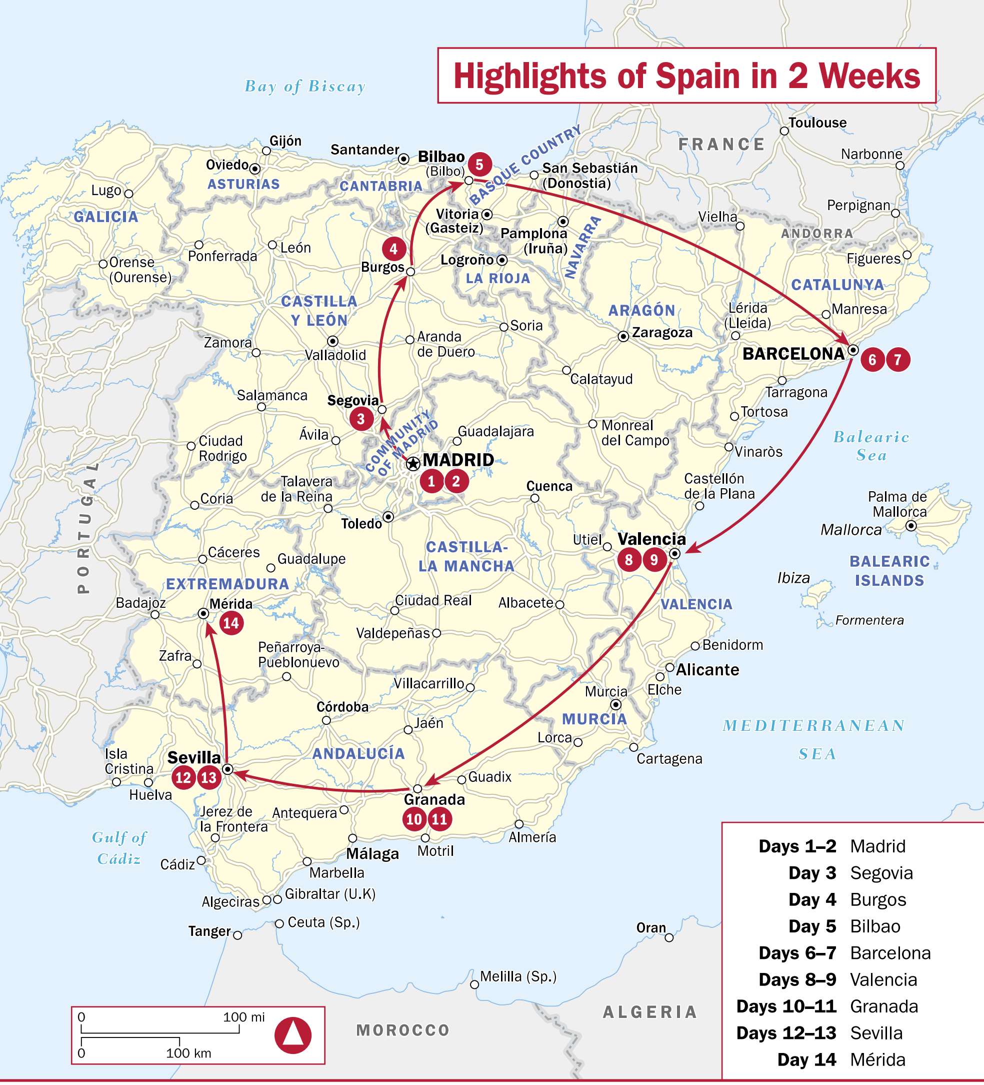
DAY 3: Segovia ★★

Swift trains let you pop into Segovia for its highlights, then keep moving. The train from Madrid takes just a half-hour. Wander over to admire the 166 arches of the **Roman Aqueduct** (p. 172), then follow the signs through the heart of the city to the fairy tale-like **Alcázar** (p. 171). Have the city's signature roast suckling pig at **José María** (p. 173) before boarding the afternoon train to Burgos, where you'll have dinner and spend the night.

The Roman Aqueduct of Segovia.

DAYS 4 & 5: Burgos ★★ & Bilbao ★★★

The **Catedral de Santa María** (p. 202) in Burgos is a twofer: a truly great Gothic cathedral packed with good painting and great sculptures for art buffs, and the resting



Highlights of Spain in 2 Weeks

Days 1–2	Madrid
Day 3	Segovia
Day 4	Burgos
Day 5	Bilbao
Days 6–7	Barcelona
Days 8–9	Valencia
Days 10–11	Granada
Days 12–13	Sevilla
Day 14	Mérida

Bay of Biscay
FRANCE
PORTUGAL
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
GALICIA
ASTURIAS
CANTABRIA
BASQUE COUNTRY
NAVARRA
LA RIOJA
ARAGÓN
CATALUNYA
ANDORRA
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
COMMUNITY OF MADRID
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
EXTREMADURA
VALENCIA
MURCIA
ANDALUCÍA
BALEARIC ISLANDS
Balearic Sea
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Gulf of Cádiz
MADRID
BARCELONA
Bilbao (Bilbo)
Burgos
Segovia
Valencia
Granada
Sevilla
Mérida
Toulouse
Narbonne
Perpignan
Figueres
Manresa
Lérida (Lleida)
Tarragona
Tortosa
Vinaròs
Castellón de la Plana
Vielha
San Sebastián (Donostia)
Santander
Gijón
Oviedo
Lugo
Orense (Ourense)
Ponferrada
León
Vitoria (Gasteiz)
Pamplona (Iruña)
Logroño
Soria
Zaragoza
Calatayud
Monreal del Campo
Aranda de Duero
Valladolid
Zamora
Salamanca
Ávila
Ciudad Rodrigo
Guadalajara
Cuenca
Talavera de la Reina
Toledo
Coria
Cáceres
Guadalupe
Badajoz
Zafra
Peñarroya-Pueblonuevo
Ciudad Real
Valdepeñas
Albacete
Utiel
Villacarrillo
Córdoba
Jaén
Murcia
Lorca
Cartagena
Elche
Alicante
Benidorm
Palma de Mallorca
Mallorca
Ibiza
Formentera
Isla Cristina
Huelva
Jerez de la Frontera
Cádiz
Antequera
Málaga
Marbella
Motril
Guadix
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place of swashbuckling legendary hero El Cid for historians. His sepulcher lies directly beneath a cathedral skylight. After visiting, take the 1pm train to Bilbao.

Make your first stop the **Museo Arqueologica de Bizkaia** (p. 625) for a complicated answer to the complicated question of “Who are the Basques?” Explore the surrounding Old Quarter, **Bilbao La Vieja** (p. 625), filling up on creative pintxos in **Plaza Nueva** in lieu of a formal dinner.

Last night was old Bilbao. This morning is the new city. Get an early start so you can walk the riverfront promenade before spending several hours in the **Guggenheim Museum** (p. 624). Do take the audio guide (included with your ticket), as navigating the unconventional gallery layout is much easier that way. Make sure you've reserved seats on the afternoon

Mosaic sculptures in Barcelona's Parc Güell, designed by Gaudí.

train to Barcelona, where you can snooze during the trip. It gets in around 10pm, just as Spaniards are eating dinner.

DAYS 6 & 7: Barcelona ★★★

Start exploring this capital of Catalán culture by strolling **Les Rambles** (p. 437), which runs from the waterfront uphill to L'Eixample, going from carny to chic along the way. Wander the **Barri Gòtic** (p. 437) and see the **Museu Picasso** (p. 446). Have lunch, catch your breath, and shoot up to Montjuïc to see Gothic Catalán art at **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (p. 451) and 20th-century whimsy at the **Fundació Joan Miró** (p. 450).

Start your second day in a state of wonder by visiting Antoni Gaudí's masterpiece basilica **La Sagrada Familia** (p. 450) and his masterpiece apartment house **La Pedrera** (Casa Milà; p. 449). Spend the afternoon on the waterfront visiting **L'Aquarium de Barcelona** (p. 452) and working on your tan on the beach at **Vila Olímpica** (p. 457). Celebrate the evening in the *xampanyerías* (champagne bars) of L'Eixample.

DAYS 8 & 9: Valencia ★★ & the City of Arts and Sciences ★★★

Take a morning train to Valencia, and spend the afternoon hitting all the Old Town sights, including the **Catedral** (p. 404) and its cool Gothic tower, **El Miguelete** (p. 404), as well as the **Palacio de Marqués de Dos Aguas** (p. 406) for the best collection of ceramics in Spain. Spend the late afternoon on **Playa Malvarossa** (p. 407), the best of the in-city beaches. That way you'll be ready to eat Valencia's great paella at one of the beachfront restaurants.

On the second day, get an early start so you can visit the **Mercado Central** (p. 411) fresh food market first thing in the morning. It is one of the largest in Europe and is a treasure house of locally raised food. Buy some spices to take home. Then spend the day at the **City of Arts and Sciences** (p. 405), inhabiting the future. It's a good idea to eat downtown, not too far from the train station, as you'll be taking the midnight hotel train to Granada.

DAYS 10 & 11: Granada ★★★ & the Alhambra ★★★

You'll arrive early, so after storing your luggage, walk around the central district, visiting the **Catedral** and its adjacent **Capilla Real (Royal Chapel;** p. 307). The cathedral facade is often said to have launched the baroque style in Spain. The chapel contains the impressive sarcophagi of Fernando and Isabel, who completed the Reconquest when they took Granada in 1492. Shop in the souk along **Caldererías Vieja and Nueva** (p. 311), and walk generally uphill through the medieval Moorish quarter, the **Albaicín** (p. 302). End the day at the **Mirador de San Nicolás**, where at sunset the Alhambra on the opposite hill glows like an object of desire. Granada's **tapas scene** (p. 311) is one of the best in Spain.

Months ago you reserved a ticket with an entrance time to the **Alhambra** (p. 303) at the beginning of the day; now's your chance to use it on your second day in Granada. Bring lunch with you so you can linger. The gardens between palaces are a great place for a picnic. The **Palacio de Carlos V** (p. 305) may lack the beauty of the Nasrid buildings, but it houses the fantastic **Museo de la Alhambra** (p. 305), which contains some of the complex's most beautiful Hispano-Muslim art. You have a choice to make about where you want to sleep. Take the 5pm train to Sevilla to spend the night there, or wait until 8am the next day and lose the morning in Sevilla.

DAYS 12 & 13: Sevilla ★★★

Whichever time you've chosen to get here, start exploring Sevilla at the palace fortress of the **Alcázar** (p. 252). Its buildings represent the synthesis of Moorish design and Christian will. The adjacent **cathedral** (p. 254) is one of the biggest in Christendom. Explore the warren of streets in the **Barrio de Santa Cruz** (p. 253), making sure that you visit the **Museo del Baile Flamenco (Museum of Flamenco Dance;** p. 256). It might inspire you to catch an impromptu performance late at night in **Triana** (p. 258).

Why waste time? On your second day, get a bicycle from any SEVICI rack so you can spend the early day exploring beautiful **Parque María Luisa** (p. 256), the museums of **Plaza de América** (p. 257), and the marvelously bizarre architecture of **Plaza d'España** (p. 257). You need to be back to the station in time to catch the late afternoon train to Mérida.

DAY 14: Mérida

Your last stop in Spain goes back, in some ways, to the country's beginnings at the ancient Roman outpost of **Mérida.** Roman remains are so ubiquitous that you sometimes literally trip over them. The **Museo Nacional de Arte Romano** (p. 241) reconstructs life in Augusta Emerita, as Mérida was known. It even has an intact section of Roman road. An adjacent outdoor compound contains both the ruins of the **amphitheater** (p. 242) where gladiatorial entertainment was held, and the **Roman Theater** (p. 242) where plays are still held. (Guess which venue had more seats?)

GREEN SPAIN IN 10 DAYS

Except for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the north of Spain doesn't register with most North Americans, who cannot conceive of a Spain without bullfights, flamenco, and parched plains. Walled off from the rest of Iberia by high mountains, the verdant northern rim is where ancient Celtic and Basque Spain persists. You'll need all forms of transportation, though buses could substitute for driving in a pinch. Fly into Santiago de Compostela, take the train to A Coruña, rent a car to drive to Oviedo, through the Picos de Europa, and to Santander. Hop a train to Bilbao, and finally take the bus to San Sebastián.

DAY 1: Santiago de Compostela ★★★

If you get to the **Catedral de Santiago** (p. 674) early, you can see the highlights, including the Portico and the tomb of St. James, before the cathedral museum opens at 10am. That way you can avoid the rush of pilgrims arriving in the afternoon. The **Museo das Peregrinacións** (p. 676) clues you in on why Santiago is such a big deal. Walking around town and observing the pilgrims is half the fun.

DAY 2: A Coruña ★

Take a morning train from Santiago, stash your luggage, and make a circuit of the waterfront of this peninsula city. Walk out to the Castillo de San Antón to see the Celtic jewelry at the **Museo Arqueológico e Histórico** (p. 668). Take Bus 1 to the **Acuarium Finisterrae** (p. 667). Don't miss the oldest lighthouse in Europe, the **Torre de Hércules** (p. 669). Spend your evening socializing at **Praza de María Pita** (p. 669).

DAY 3: Oviedo ★★

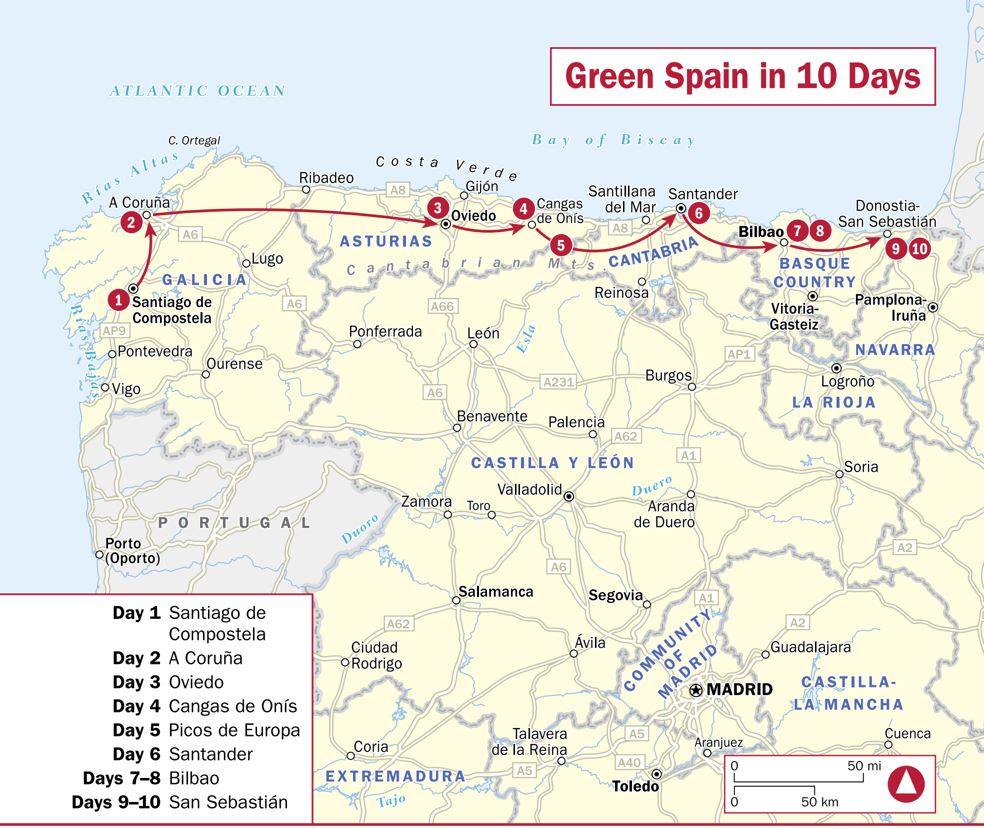
Driving to Oviedo takes about 3½ hours and includes some spectacular mountain scenery before you return to the coast. Arrive in time for lunch and visit the **Catedral de San Salvador** (p. 660) after coffee. The two stunning pre-Romanesque churches of **Santa María del Naranco** and **San Miguel de Lillo** (p. 661) reopen for tours at 3:30pm, saving your late afternoon for shopping and evening for dining and strolling.

DAY 4: Cangas de Onís ★★★

The drive east to this outpost of the Picos de Europa takes just over an hour, giving you plenty of time to visit the **Capilla de Santa Cruz** (p. 651) before heading out of town to the mountain shrine of **Covadonga** (p. 652). Save time for hiking the trails around the ancient battle site and visiting the tomb of Pelayo, high on a cliff behind the waterfall. Spend the night in Cangas listening to hikers' tales.

DAY 5: The Picos de Europa ★★★

From Cangas, drive east to **Las Arenas de Cabrales** (p. 652) for lunch on Cabrales cheese and local cider. Continue east on AS–114 about a half-hour to N-621, and go south toward Potes, stopping at the **Centro de Visitantes Sotama** (p. 649) for an orientation to the mountains. Follow signs to **Fuente Dé** (p. 650) for a cable car ride and a ridge hike. In late afternoon, retrace your steps to Potes and follow N-621 to the coast, then E-70/A-8 east to Santander (1½ hr.), where you can drop the car.



Green Spain in 10 Days

Day 1	Santiago de Compostela
Day 2	A Coruña
Day 3	Oviedo
Day 4	Cangas de Onís
Day 5	Picos de Europa
Day 6	Santander
Days 7–8	Bilbao
Days 9–10	San Sebastián

ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bay of Biscay
C. Ortegal
Rías Altas
Rías Bajas
Costa Verde
Cantabrian Mts
A Coruña
Ribadeo
Gijón
Oviedo
Cangas de Onís
Santillana del Mar
Santander
Bilbao
Donostia-San Sebastián
Lugo
Santiago de Compostela
Pontevedra
Vigo
Ourense
Ponferrada
León
Reinosa
Vitoria-Gasteiz
Pamplona-Iruña
Logroño
Burgos
Benavente
Palencia
Soria
Valladolid
Zamora
Toro
Aranda de Duero
Porto (Oporto)
Salamanca
Segovia
Ávila
Ciudad Rodrigo
Guadalajara
MADRID
Coria
Talavera de la Reina
Aranjuez
Toledo
Cuenca
GALICIA
ASTURIAS
CANTABRIA
BASQUE COUNTRY
NAVARRA
LA RIOJA
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
PORTUGAL
COMMUNITY OF MADRID
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
EXTREMADURA
Duero
Esla
Tajo
A8
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DAY 6: Santander ★

Enjoy a leisurely day at this elegant beach resort town. Spend a few hours on the beach at **El Sardinero** (p. 634), before visiting the **Museo Marítimo del Cantábrico** (p. 637) to get a handle on the Cantabrian coast and its fishing and mercantile history. If you find time, check out the Roman ruins beneath the lower-level chapel at the **Catedral** (p. 636). Pick up your train tickets in advance so you can catch the 8am (weekdays) FEVE train to Bilbao the next day.

DAYS 7 & 8: Bilbao ★★★

Before you enter the **Guggenheim Bilbao Museum** (p. 624), walk all around it and across the river to see the building in its glorious entirety. Once you've seen the galleries, follow the riverside promenade to **La Parte Vieja** (p. 601). Visit the **Museo Arqueologica de Bizkaia** (p. 625), and immerse yourself in the shops and lively *pintxos* scene.

The next day, see the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (p. 625), focusing on Basque artists. (In the 1930s, these painters of pretty landscapes turned their attention to social justice issues.) There's still time for a round-trip bus visit to **Gernika (Guernica;** p. 618), the Basque village so memorably recalled by Picasso's great canvas.

DAYS 9 & 10: San Sebastián ★★★

It's a 75-minute bus ride to this resort city from Bilbao. City buses go right to **Playa de la Concha** (p. 595). Over 2 days you'll have time to catch some rays and still hit the sights: the **Museo de Sociedad Vasca y Ciudadanía** (p. 603) for a rundown on the city's history, the docks to see fishermen unloading their catch, and the adjacent **Palacio del Mar** (p. 603), the aquarium. Get a fabulous overview of the city and its long crescent beach by riding the funicular to **Monte Igeldo** (p. 605). **Bar-hopping for *pintxos*** (p. 607) or going out for a prolonged dinner are the main activities in San Sebastián. When it's time to go, take a bus direct to the Bilbao airport.

A WEEK IN SPAIN FOR ART LOVERS

Picasso stood on the backs of giants—a thousand years of Spanish artists whose work fills museums around the country. This art connoisseur's whirlwind tour ranges from High Gothic to ultracontemporary. Book 4 nights' hotel in Madrid, because you'll visit two great art towns as day trips. RENFE will also zoom you to Barcelona and deliver you to Bilbao.

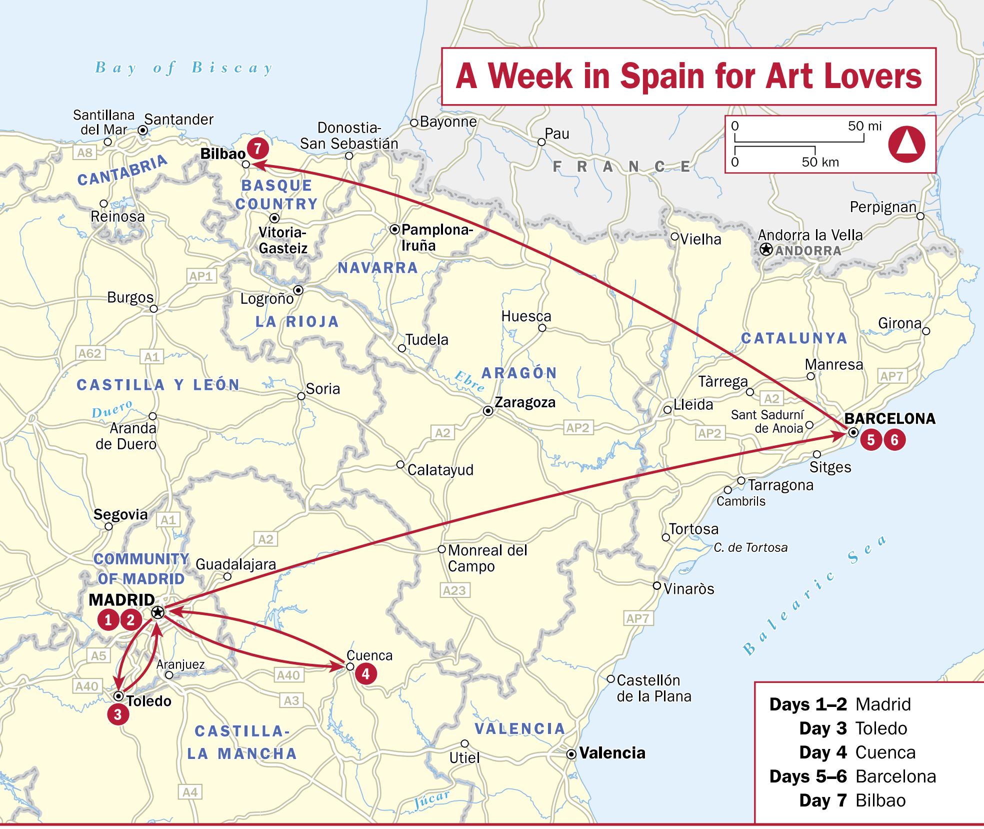
DAYS 1 & 2: Madrid ★★★

Hold your horses. The Prado is open long hours, but the museum of the **Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando** (p. 78) is only open until midafternoon. Start here, just outside Puerta del Sol. Goya arranged the permanent collection to show the progression from antiquity to present. Now you can move on to the **Museo del Prado** (p. 87), one of the top museums of European art. Almost every good painting by Velázquez is here (galleries 12, 14–16, 18), and most of the famous Goyas (galleries 66–67, 85, 90–94). Paintings by El Greco (galleries 9A and 10A) are good, but not Toledo quality.

On your second day, the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía** (p. 90) picks up chronologically where the Prado left off—the early 20th century. Some of the most fascinating works were made by such famous artists as Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, and Juan Gris *before* they became famous. Of course, Picasso's *Guernica* is unavoidable (and haunting). Take a long lunch to clear your head before moving on to Madrid's *third* great art museum, the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** (p. 91). Linger in the Gothic galleries assembled by the Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza, or focus on his wife Carmen Cervera's seminal Picassos and American Abstract Expressionists.

DAY 3: Toledo ★★★

RENFE whisks you to Toledo in 35 minutes to see the city that inspired El Greco for his whole life. Start with the **Museo del Greco** (p. 155) to set the painter in context. Then see some of his greatest paintings in the **Iglesia de Santo Tomé** (p. 154), the **Catedral** (p. 152), and the **Museo-Hospital de Santa Cruz** (p. 155), where you can get close enough to the works to see every impasto brushstroke that prefigures Action Painting and study the analytical handling of space that foreshadows cubism.


A Week in Spain for Art Lovers
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Days 1–2 Madrid
Day 3 Toledo
Day 4 Cuenca
Days 5–6 Barcelona
Day 7 Bilbao
Bay of Biscay
Santillana del Mar
Santander
Bilbao
7
Donostia-San Sebastián
Bayonne
Pau
FRANCE
CANTABRIA
BASQUE COUNTRY
Reinosa
Vitoria-Gasteiz
Pamplona-Iruña
NAVARRA
Vielha
Andorra la Vella
ANDORRA
Perpignan
Burgos
Logroño
LA RIOJA
Huesca
Tudela
CATALUNYA
Girona
Manresa
ARAGÓN
Ebre
Tàrrega
Zaragoza
Lleida
Sant Sadurní de Anoia
BARCELONA
5
6
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
Duero
Soria
Aranda de Duero
Calatayud
Sitges
Tarragona
Cambrils
Segovia
Tortosa
C. de Tortosa
Monreal del Campo
COMMUNITY OF MADRID
Guadalajara
MADRID
1
2
Vinaròs
Balearic Sea
Aranjuez
Cuenca
4
Toledo
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Castellón de la Plana
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
VALENCIA
Utiel
Valencia
Júcar
A8
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A62
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AP2
AP7
A23
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A40
A3
A4

DAY 4: Cuenca ★★

Another train will zip you from Madrid to Cuenca in less than an hour—giving you a long day to explore this ancient high-mesa citadel that inspired a movement in modern Spanish art. Begin with the **Museo del Arte Abstracto Español** (p. 187) in one of Cuenca's famous *casa colgadas*, the "hanging houses" cantilevered over the river gorge. The **Fundación Antonio Saura** (p. 187) focuses on one of the greatest of the mid-20th-century Grupo El Paso artists. The **Fundación Antonio Pérez** (p. 187) fleshes out Spanish modern art with its overseas influences.

DAYS 5 & 6: Barcelona

Catch an early train from Madrid to Barcelona so you have enough time to tour Antoni Gaudí's masterpiece basilica **La Sagrada Familia** (p. 450) and his apartment house **La Pedrera** (Casa Milà; p. 449) before visiting the **Museu Picasso** (p. 446). The virtual tour on the museum's website will help you determine which of the 22 galleries you'd like to focus on. They're arranged chronologically, except for six galleries of prints at the end. Together, that should take up your first day.

Catalán artists might have been Europe's best in the 11th and 12th centuries—the first glimmers of Renaissance perspective and facial modeling

MAZAPAN
EL FORO
CAFE-BAR

Toledo's Plaza Zocodover.

appeared centuries ahead of schedule in murals and altarpieces installed in country churches here. Fortunately, these treasures were gathered at the **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (p. 451) on Montjuïc. Nearby, the **Fundació Joan Miró** (p. 450) concentrates hundreds of paintings, graphics, and sculptures by the singular Catalán abstract master inside a brilliantly designed building flooded with indirect light. Explore them on your second day, then take the late afternoon train to Bilbao.

DAY 7: Bilbao ★★★

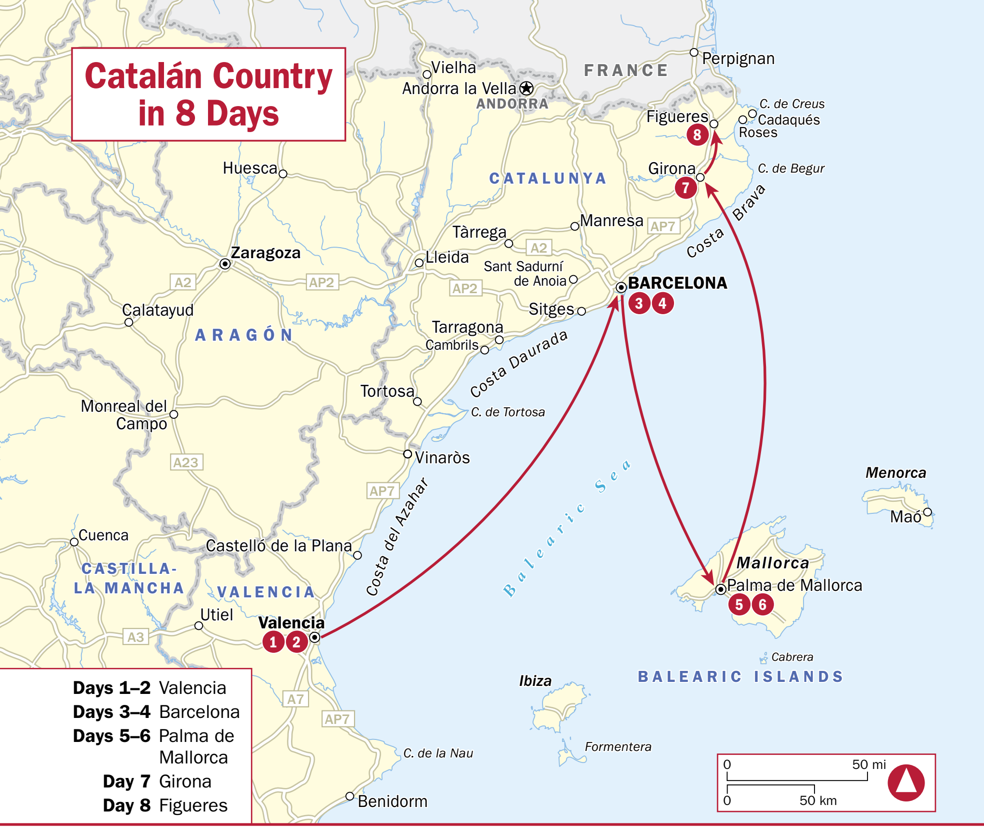
Since you arrived in the late evening of the previous day, you have a full day to enjoy the artistic attractions of Bilbao. Start by having a look at Philippe Starck's design for the **AlhóndigaBilbao** cultural and sport complex (p. 623) and tour through centuries of mostly Basque art the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (p. 625). Have lunch on the riverside plaza outside before enjoying the crazy spaces (and sometimes even crazier art) inside the **Guggenheim Museum** (p. 624).

CATALÁN COUNTRY IN 8 DAYS

Jaume I "the Conqueror" (1208–76) wrested Valencia and the Balearics from the Moors and talked Louis IX of France (St. Louis) into handing over the county of Barcelona. Jaume spoke a language now called Catalán, the basis for a culture distinct from Castilian Spain. This itinerary celebrates the Catalán sensibility from its art to its gastronomy, as well as its beautiful natural landscapes.

DAY 1: Valencia ★★★

To start your tour of Catalán Spain, immerse yourself in visionary Catalán architecture. Valencia's native son, architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava, vaulted Valencia into international prominence with his designs for


Catalán Country in 8 Days
Days 1–2 Valencia
Days 3–4 Barcelona
Days 5–6 Palma de Mallorca
Day 7 Girona
Day 8 Figueres
FRANCE
Perpignan
Vielha
Andorra la Vella
ANDORRA
Figueres
8
C. de Creus
Cadaqués
Roses
Girona
7
C. de Begur
Costa Brava
CATALUNYA
Huesca
Manresa
AP7
Tàrrega
A2
Zaragoza
Lleida
Sant Sadurní de Anoia
AP2
A2
BARCELONA
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4
Sitges
Calatayud
ARAGÓN
Tarragona
Cambrils
Costa Daurada
Tortosa
C. de Tortosa
Monreal del Campo
A23
Vinaròs
AP7
Costa del Azahar
Balearic Sea
Menorca
Maó
Cuenca
Castelló de la Plana
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
VALENCIA
Mallorca
Palma de Mallorca
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Utiel
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Cabrera
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the **City of Arts and Sciences** (p. 405), the cultural complex in the city's dry river bed. The buildings are amazing in themselves—his planetarium, l'Hemisfèric, actually has a blinking eye—and the reflecting pools only magnify the vision. Shattered tiles set in white concrete are a direct homage to Calatrava's Catalán inspiration, architect Antoni Gaudí.

DAY 2: L'Albufera ★

Paella is a Catalán gift to the world of gastronomy. Rent a bicycle in the morning to pedal south along the coast from Valencia's port to visit the **Parque Natural de l'Albufera** (p. 417). Explore the byways on the coastal side of the road or bike down back roads through the rice paddies. In **El Saler,** enjoy a lunchtime paella made with rice, vegetables, and fish or meat from the immediate surroundings. In the late afternoon or evening, hop a train to Barcelona (3 hr.).

DAYS 3 & 4: Barcelona

Few streets in the world offer such a passing parade of humanity as **Les Rambles** (p. 437), which runs from the waterfront uphill to L'Eixample, becoming more respectable with every step. Spend half the day wandering the **Barri Gòtic** (p. 437) and plumbing the Catalán influence on Picasso at the **Museu Picasso** (p. 446). Spend the other half on Montjuïc to see the

The park atop Barcelona's Montjuïc mountain.

astonishing Gothic Catalán art at **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (p. 451) and 20th-century Catalán whimsy at the **Fundació Joan Miró** (p. 450).

You can't leave Barcelona without drinking in the designs of Antoni Gaudí, the architect who changed the way Cataláns see. Arrange a guided tour of his masterpiece basilica **La Sagrada Familia** (p. 450) on your second day to get a look at his upside-down maquette for the church. Spend the afternoon on the waterfront, starting with a great black rice dish at one of the outdoor restaurants, then visiting **L'Aquarium de Barcelona** (p. 452), which feels as if you were walking along the sea floor. Catch some rays on the beach at **Vila Olímpica** (p. 457), and start the evening in the *xampenyarías* (champagne bars) of L'Eixample.

DAYS 5 & 6: Mallorca ★★

Flights from Barcelona into Palma de Mallorca take less than an hour, so you'll have plenty of time to visit the **Catedral** (p. 704) and get a visual overview from **Castell de Bellver** (p. 704) before checking out modern Catalán sculpture at **Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani** (p. 705). Later in the afternoon, hop a city bus to **Playa Nova** (p. 702) to put in some serious beach time.

Spend at least part of your second day exploring the erstwhile citrus-growing capital of Sóller by riding the **vintage 1912 narrow-gauge train** (p. 713) over the scenic high **Serra de Tramuntana.** Reflecting its wealth at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Sóller is filled with superb *modernisme* buildings. A 1913 tram takes you from Sóller to its harbor, where beaches are lined with cafes and restaurants.

DAY 7: Girona

Catch the early morning flight from Palma to Girona so you have time to explore the old Jewish Quarter, **the Call** (p. 529), and visit the **cathedral and its museum** (p. 531) to see the amazing Romanesque ***Tapestry of the Creation.*** Flash-forward to the **Museu del Cinema,** a striking collection of movie artifacts. Be sure to make a walking circuit of the city, strolling the medieval backbone of the hill on which it's built, then the riverfront lined with pastel buildings like a chain of children's blocks.

DAY 8: Figueres ★★★

The parched landscapes of painter Salvador Dalí's surrealist period (think limp watches) weren't imagined. **Figueres** (p. 547) looks like that. Take a day trip by train to visit the **Teatre-Museu Dalí** (p. 547). The artist could have been the lost Catalán Marx brother, so don't expect anything about the museum to be serious. It's okay to be convulsed with laughter, whether contemplating his self-portrait in heaven as seen from earth (mostly big feet) or his Warhol-like fascination with pop-culture divas. At the end of the day, head to Barcelona for maximum transportation options leaving the area.

ANDALUCÍA IN 10 DAYS

Flamboyant flamenco, matadors in suits of lights, cascades of bougainvillea, casks of sherry, dancing stallions—they all evoke the color and verve of the country-size region of Andalucía, Spain's passionate south. The Moorish-tinged cities of Córdoba, Sevilla, and Granada would be enough, but Andalucía also boasts historic ports, scenic mountains, and the sherry country.

DAY 1: Sevilla ★★★

Andalucía's split personality is cast in stone at the palace fortress of the **Alcázar** (p. 252): Christian conquerors just couldn't resist decorating with Moorish flair. The adjacent **cathedral** (p. 254) is so big because it had to obliterate the Great Mosque that formerly stood in its spot. Between them, these

Tapestry of the Creation, in Girona cathedral.

monuments will take more than half a day. Then wander the **Barrio de Santa Cruz** (p. 253), the quarter that Christian rulers established for their Jewish administrators. On the side of the barrio farthest from the cathedral, seek out **Casa de Pilatos** (p. 253) to enjoy its flower-bedecked gardens.

DAY 2: Córdoba ★★★

On your second day, take the morning slow train (80 min. at a third the cost of the high-speed) to **Córdoba.** Walk over the **Puente Romano** (p. 277) to visit the **Torre de la Calahorra** (p. 280) for an orientation to the history and cultures of Córdoba. Walk back across to experience the glory of the **Mezquita** (p. 278), one of the great religious sites in Europe. See the elegant gardens of the **Alcázar** (p. 278), then shop, snack, and photograph your way through the medieval warren of the **Judería** (p. 278) until it's time to return to Sevilla for the night.

DAY 3: Sevilla ★★★

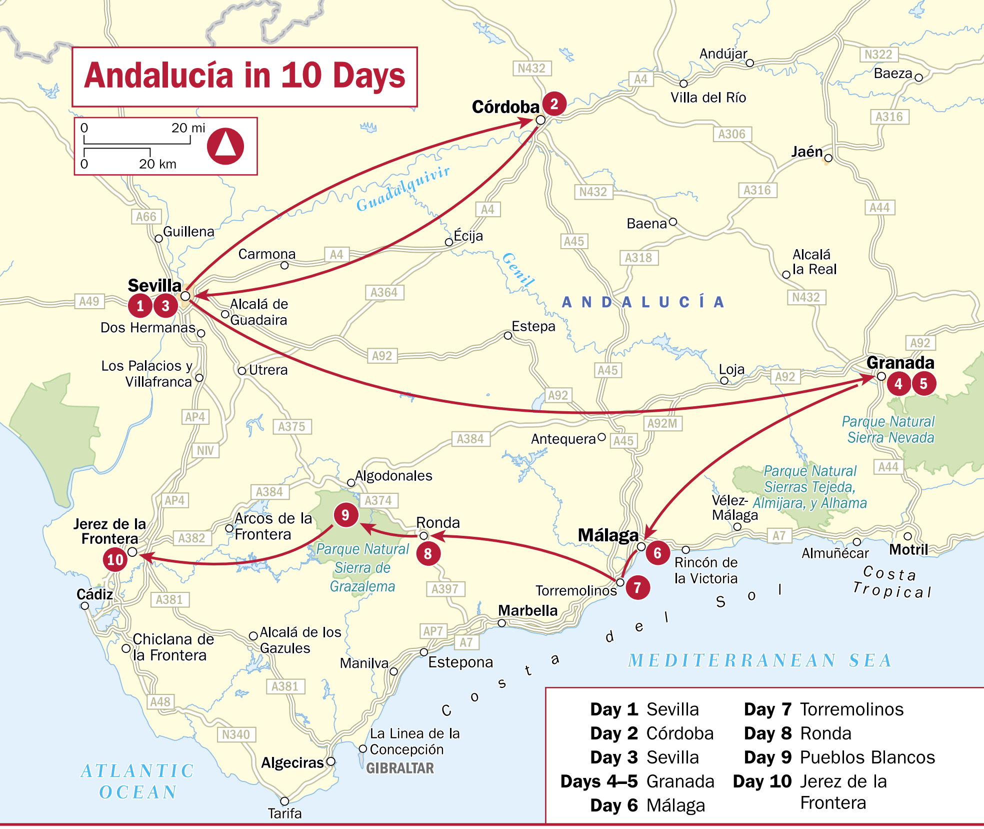
Plunge back into the Barrio de Santa Cruz to spend some time learning the fine points of flamenco styles at the **Museo del Baile Flamenco** (**Museum of Flamenco Dance;** p. 256). Then stroll the banks of the Río Guadalquivír, paying a quick visit to the **Torre del Oro** (p. 258) before exploring the **Barrio de Triana** (p. 258), the traditional quarter of fishermen, sailors, and Gypsies. If you've fallen in love with Andalucían tiles, you can shop in Triana's historic **ceramics factories** (p. 258).

DAYS 4 & 5: Granada ★★★, the Alhambra & Generalife ★★★

The train ride from Sevilla eats up most of the morning, but still leaves time to investigate the **Catedral** and its adjacent **Capilla Real** (**Royal Chapel;** p. 307), dominated by the sarcophagi of Fernando and Isabel, who conquered Granada in 1492. Enjoy bargaining with the vendors in the souk along **calderarías Vieja and Nueva** (p. 311), and walk through the medieval Moorish quarter, the **Albaicín** (p. 300). End the day at the **Mirador de San Nicolás**, where at sunset the Alhambra on the opposite hill glows like an object of desire. Granada's **tapas scene** (p. 311) is one of the best in Spain.

You were smart enough to purchase a reserved ticket with an entrance time at the beginning of your second day, so be prompt for your 15-minute window of entry to the **Alhambra** (p. 303), and bring your lunch with you. Strategies for seeing this amazing fortress palace abound, but we

A pool at the Generalife.


Andalucía in 10 Days
0 20 mi
0 20 km
Day 1 Sevilla
Day 2 Córdoba
Day 3 Sevilla
Days 4–5 Granada
Day 6 Málaga
Day 7 Torremolinos
Day 8 Ronda
Day 9 Pueblos Blancos
Day 10 Jerez de la Frontera
Córdoba
Sevilla
Granada
Málaga
Torremolinos
Ronda
Jerez de la Frontera
Cádiz
Andújar
Villa del Río
Baeza
Jaén
Baena
Alcalá la Real
Écija
Carmona
Guillena
Alcalá de Guadaira
Dos Hermanas
Los Palacios y Villafranca
Utrera
Estepa
Loja
Antequera
Algodonales
Arcos de la Frontera
Vélez-Málaga
Rincón de la Victoria
Almuñécar
Motril
Marbella
Estepona
Manilva
Chiclana de la Frontera
Alcalá de los Gazules
La Linea de la Concepción
GIBRALTAR
Algeciras
Tarifa
Guadalquivir
Genil
ANDALUCÍA
Parque Natural Sierra Nevada
Parque Natural Sierras Tejeda, Almijara, y Alhama
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
Costa Tropical
Costa del Sol
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
N432
A4
N322
A316
A306
A66
A44
A45
A318
A49
A364
N432
A92
A92M
A375
AP4
NIV
A384
A374
A382
A381
A397
AP7
A7
A48
N340

subscribe to the idea that you should linger and enjoy, as guards don't let you backtrack. The gardens between palaces are a great place for a picnic. The **Palacio de Carlos V** (p. 305) may lack the beauty of the Nasrid buildings, but it houses the fantastic **Museo de la Alhambra** (p. 305), which contains some of the complex's most beautiful Hispano-Muslim art.

DAY 6: Málaga ★★

The bus from Granada takes less than 2 hours. Once you're settled, let young Picasso show you around. At his birthplace, the **Fundación Picasso** (p. 384), you can get a map of sites important in his childhood and follow the child prodigy around town. Ultimately, you'll want to devote several hours to the **Museo Picasso Málaga** (p. 384). Then see what he inspired by looking at even newer work in the **Centro de Arte Contemporáneo** (CAC) de Málaga (p. 383), the city's galleries of contemporary art. You'll find excellent fashion shopping on the main street, **Calle Larios.**

DAY 7: Torremolinos

It's a cinch to take the train from Málaga to the beach resort of **Torremolinos** (p. 377), 19 minutes away on the C1 commuter line. "Torrie" was the first Costa del Sol resort to be developed, and while it can be overwhelming, it has the best beaches in the region. Keep walking west on the boardwalk until you reach **Playa La Carihuela** (p. 356). This former fishing village has the broadest sands and best restaurants for a quintessential beach experience. Return to Málaga to sleep.

DAY 8: Ronda ★★

Pick up a rental car in the morning and drive the inland route to **Ronda,** one of the most dramatic towns in Andalucía. A monster gorge divides old and new towns, and you can get the lowdown on attempts to span it over the centuries at the **Centro de Interpretación del Puente Nuevo** (p. 320). There are many sights in Ronda, but the most evocative are the famous **Plaza de Toros** (p. 322) and its museum, and the **Palacio de Mondragón** (p. 320), where a small museum in this Moorish mansion gives you an intimate look at life in Moorish Spain.

DAY 9: Pueblos Blancos

Today's driving tour cuts due west across the Sierra de Grazalema from Ronda through some of the beautiful **Pueblos Blancos**—the white towns clinging to the hillside. Follow signs to **Zahara de la Sierra** (p. 328) for a true mountaintop redoubt, then to **Grazalema** (p. 332), where lunch on the main plaza is a good idea. Continue west to **Arcos de la Frontera** (p. 326), where you should end up at the top of the hill in the tiny square surrounded by a cathedral, a palace, and a *parador.* Overnight here.

DAY 10: Jerez de la Frontera ★★

No need to rush—the drive to Jerez from Arcos is just 40 minutes across flat vineyard country, and you're done with the car. Those vineyards (and many more) help make the wine named for the city, sherry. Book a tour at one of the **sherry bodegas** (p. 336). Jerez is almost as famous for its horses, especially the Carthusian horse bred in the Middle Ages in monasteries near Jerez. Be sure to visit the **Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre** (p. 339). This famed school of equestrian arts puts on weekly shows of dancing horses; you can also visit the rehearsals. It's a 90-minute train ride back to Sevilla.

Trained horses at the Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre.

MADRID

4

Madrid was conceived, planned, and built when Spain was at the peak of its power, and the city became the solid and dignified seat of a great empire stretching around the world. Monumental Madrid glitters almost as much as Paris, Rome, or London—and it parties more than any other city in Europe. Although it lacks the spectacular Romanesque and Gothic monuments of older Spanish cities, Madrid never fails to charm with its grandeur.

Madrid sits at the highest altitude of any European capital, and its climate is blisteringly hot in summer but often quite cold in winter. Traffic roars down wide boulevards that stretch from the narrow streets of the city's 17th-century core to the modern late-20th-century suburbs.

Don't come to Madrid expecting a city that looks classically Iberian. True, many of the older buildings in the historic core look as Spanish as those you might encounter in rural towns across the plains of La Mancha. However, a great number of the monuments and palaces mirror the architecture of France—an oddity that reflects the link between the royal families of Spain and France.

Most striking is how the city has blossomed since Franco's demise. During the 1980s, Madrid was the epicenter of La Movida ("the Movement"), a creative burst of expression in the arts and pop culture after decades of puritanical and fascistic repression. Today, despite competition from Barcelona, Sevilla, and Bilbao, Madrid still reigns as the country's artistic and creative center.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The cafes of Plaza Mayor.** ABOVE: **Rowboats in Parque del Retiro's lake.**

More world-class art is on view in the central neighborhood around the stellar Museo del Prado than within virtually any concentrated area in the world. You can see Caravaggios and Rembrandts at the Thyssen-Bornemisza; Goyas, Zurbaráns, and Velázquezes at the Prado itself; and Dalís and Mirós—not to mention Picasso's wrenching *Guernica*—at the Reina Sofía.

Madrid seems forever *en obras*—that is, under construction—but the new structures rising throughout the city tend to reflect cutting-edge design, likely as not by Spanish designers. Still, some of the best of Old Madrid remains: the opulence of the Palacio Real, the bustle of El Rastro's flea market, and the sultry fever of late-night flamenco. And visitors still find rest and relaxation in the verdant oasis of Parque del Retiro, just a stone's throw from the Prado.

If your time in Spain is limited, a stopover in Madrid, coupled with day trips to its environs, can provide a primer on virtually every major period and school of Spanish art and architecture dating from the Roman occupation. No fewer than nine world-class destinations are within 161km (100 miles). They include Toledo, one of the most successful blends of medieval Arab, Jewish, and Christian cultures in the world; Segovia, site of a well-preserved ancient Roman aqueduct and monuments commemorating Queen Isabel's 1474 coronation; and Ávila, the most perfectly preserved medieval fortified city in Iberia, with its 11th-century battlements and endless references to Catholicism's earthiest mystic, Santa Teresa. El Escorial and the palace and monuments at Aranjuez reveal the tastes and manias that inspired rulers of Spain throughout history. The neofascist monument at El Valle de los Caídos (the Valley of the Fallen) is a powerful testament to those who died in the Spanish Civil War. To see rural Iberia at its most charming, head for Chinchón, or, better yet, visit the cliff-top village of Cuenca, the "getaway" for many modern Spanish artists and musicians. For more information on these day trips, see chapter 5, p. 148.

THE best MADRID EXPERIENCES

- **Studying Las Meninas:** Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) was one of Spain's greatest artists, and this painting in the Museo del Prado is perhaps the most unusual and psychologically complex royal portrait ever painted. It features children of the royal household—a source of delight to visiting school groups.
- **Enjoying family Sundays:** Join the Madrileño families as they picnic and play in the Parque del Retiro, the former royal hunting grounds given to the people by Carlos III. Rent a rowboat for a spin around the lake, enjoy the street performers, and stop to smell the roses.
- **Driving a hard bargain:** The flea market of El Rastro is one of the best in all of Spain, and enduring the jostle of the crowds to haggle over an "antique" pot or a bold trinket is part of the fun.
- **Eating *patatas bravas* at the source:** The French have pommes frites and the Brits have chips. But the Spaniards achieve potato nirvana by frying them in olive oil and dipping them in *bravas* sauce, a creamy condiment spiked with sweet paprika and tomato. The dish originated in Madrid at Las Bravas.
- **Partying into la madrugada:** Just as the English speak of the afternoon, Spaniards speak of the after-midnight, or madrugada. The best way to greet the early morning hours in Madrid is to catch a late flamenco show at Casa Patas.

The modern terminal at Barajas Airport.

ESSENTIALS

Arriving

BY PLANE Madrid's international airport, **Barajas** (airport code: MAD), lies 15km (9⅓ miles) east of the city center and has two terminals—one for international traffic, the other for domestic—that are connected by a moving sidewalk and light rail. For Barajas Airport information, check www.aena.es, or call ✆ **90-240-47-04.**

Air-conditioned airport **buses** can take you from the arrivals terminal to the Atocha train station. The fare is 2€; buses leave every 10 to 15 minutes, either to or from the airport.

By **taxi,** expect to pay 25€ and up, plus surcharges, for the trip to the airport and for baggage handling. If you take an unmetered limousine, make sure you negotiate the price in advance.

A **subway** connecting Barajas Airport and central Madrid provides additional ground transportation options; however, the ride involves a transfer: Take line 8 to Nuevos Ministerios and switch to line 4; the one-way trip costs 3€.

BY TRAIN Madrid has two major railway stations: **Atocha** (Glorieta Carlos V; Metro: Atocha RENFE), for trains to and from Lisbon, Toledo, Andalucía, and Extremadura; and **Chamartín** (in the northern suburbs at Augustín de Foxá; Metro: Chamartín), for trains to and from Barcelona, Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla y León, the Basque Country, Aragón, Catalunya, Levante (Valencia), Murcia, and the French frontier. For information about connections from any of these stations, call **RENFE (Spanish Railways)** at ✆ **90-232-03-20** (daily 5am–11:50pm).

For tickets, go to RENFE's main office at Alcalá 44 (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20;** Metro: Banco de España). The office is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 11:30pm.

BY BUS Madrid has at least 14 major bus terminals, including **Estación Sur de Autobuses,** Calle Méndez Álvaro 83 (www.estaciondeautobuses.com; ✆ **91-468-42-00;** Metro: Méndez Álvaro). Most buses pass through this large station.

BY CAR All highways within Spain radiate outward from Madrid. The following are the major highways into Madrid, with information on driving distances to the city:

Highways to Madrid

ROUTE	FROM	DISTANCE TO MADRID
N-I	Irún	507km (315 miles)
N-II	Barcelona	626km (389 miles)
N-III	Valencia	349km (217 miles)
N-IV	Cádiz	625km (388 miles)
N-V	Badajoz	409km (254 miles)
N-VI	Galicia	602km (374 miles)

Visitor Information

The most convenient **tourist office** is located on Plaza Mayor 27 (Salón de Columnas de la Casa de la Panadería; www.esmadrid.com; ✆ **91-588-16-36;** Metro: Sól or Ópera); it's open daily from 9:30am to 8:30pm. Ask for a street map of the next town on your itinerary, especially if you're driving. The staff here can give you a list of hotels and *hostales.*

WEBSITES The Tourist Office of Spain (**www.spain.info**) can help you plan your trip with listings of lodging options, attractions, tour operators, and packages, plus handy tips on getting around. For the viewpoints of individual travelers, check **www.tripadvisor.com** and **www.virtualtourist.com**—but be wary, as such sites tend to highlight reviewers with personal agendas. The revised design of the personal website **www.madridman.com** makes it seem a more credible source for its extensive, if unofficial, information.

Travel Discounts

The **Madrid Card** grants access to dozens of museums, discounts on public transport, and reductions at many restaurants. Available at local tourist offices, the card costs 32€ (1 day), 42€ (2 days), 52€ (3 days), and 85€ (5 days). Bear in mind that many of the museums covered are already free or offer reduced admission on certain days. But the card may still be a good deal because it also acts as a pass for 5 or 10 days of trips on the city's subway and buses. Some nightclubs offer free drinks or discounts on their cover charges.

City Layout

All roads lead to Madrid, which has outgrown its previous boundaries and is branching out in all directions.

Schweppes
P

Madrid's main street, the Gran Vía.

MAIN ARTERIES & SQUARES Every new arrival must find the **Gran Vía,** which cuts a winding pathway across the city, beginning at **Plaza de España,** where you'll find one of Europe's tallest skyscrapers, the Edificio España. This avenue is home to a large concentration of shops, hotels, restaurants, and movie houses in the city, with **Calle de Serrano** a close runner-up.

South of the Gran Vía lies **Puerta del Sol,** the starting point for all road distances within Spain and the central crossroads of the public transit system. The bustling square is the interstice between the oldest quarters of Madrid and the commercial heart of the city. **Calle de Alcalá** begins here at Sol and runs for 4km (2½ miles).

Plaza Mayor lies at the heart of Old Madrid and is an attraction in itself, with its mix of French and Georgian architecture. Pedestrians pass beneath the arches of the huge square onto the narrow streets of the district known as La Latina, where you can find intriguing restaurants and *tascas* serving bountiful tapas and drinks. The colonnaded ground level of the plaza is filled with shops, many of which sell souvenir trinkets.

The area immediately south of Plaza Mayor—known as *barrios bajos*—is a colorful district of medieval cobblestone streets lined with 16th- and

Finding an Address

Madrid is a city of both grand boulevards and cramped, meandering streets. Finding an address can sometimes be a challenge, primarily owing to the way buildings are numbered. On most streets, the numbering begins on one side and runs consecutively until the end, resuming on the other side and going in the opposite direction. Thus, no. 50 could be opposite no. 250. But there are many exceptions to this system. That's why it's important to know the cross street as well as the number of the address you're looking for. To complicate matters, some addresses don't have a number at all. What they have is the designation *s/n,* meaning *sin número* (without number). For example, the address of the Panteón de Goya (Goya's Tomb) is Glorieta de San Antonio de la Florida s/n. Note that in Spain, as in many other European countries, the building number comes after the street name.

17th-century architecture. Exit Plaza Mayor through the **Arco de Cuchilleros** to Cava Baja, a street packed with markets, restaurants, and taverns.

Gran Vía ends at Calle de Alcalá, and at this juncture lies the grand **Plaza de la Cibeles,** with its fountain to Cybele, "the mother of the gods," and the main post office (known as "the cathedral of post offices"). From Cibeles, the wide **Paseo de Recoletos** begins a short run north to Plaza de Colón. From this latter square rolls the serpentine central artery of Madrid: **Paseo de la Castellana,** flanked by expensive shops, apartment buildings, luxury hotels, and foreign embassies.

Heading south from Cibeles is **Paseo del Prado,** where you'll find Spain's major attraction, the **Museo del Prado,** as well as the **Jardín Botánico** (Botanical Garden). The *paseo* leads to the Atocha railway station. To the west of the garden lies **Parque del Retiro,** a magnificent park once reserved for royalty, with a restaurant, a rose garden, and two lakes.

STREET MAPS Arm yourself with a good map before setting out. **Falk** maps are good (www.omnimap.com/catalog/int/falk-map.htm), and are available at most newsstands and kiosks. Free maps given away by tourist offices and hotels are adequate only for general orientation, as they don't list the maze of small streets that is Old Madrid. **Google Maps** (http://maps.google.com), however, are very detailed for Madrid.

The Neighborhoods in Brief

Madrid can be divided into three principal districts—**Old Madrid,** which holds the most tourist interest; **Ensanche,** the new district, often with the best shops and hotels; and the **periphery,** of less interest to visitors.

PUERTA DEL SOL AND LAS LETRAS The Old City radiated from Puerta del Sol even before Habsburg kings made Madrid the capital. The hub of public transport, Sol, connects ancient and modern Madrid. Heading south and uphill from Sol is the barrio called Las Letras, because it has attracted writers for centuries. Lope de Vega, Cervantes, and even Lorca lived and worked here. It includes the Plaza Santa Ana, one of the city's best spots for tapas and nightlife.

PLAZA MAYOR AND LA LATINA This is the heart of the district most visitors come to see, especially after dark. Sometimes called the "Madrid of the Asturias," it is better known as La Latina. From Plaza Mayor, the Arco de Cuchilleros leads to Cava de San Miguel, Cava Alta, and Cava Baja, all full of taverns and bars. La Latina continues downhill west to the Manzanares River. Also in this area, Muslim Madrid is centered on the Palacio de Oriente and Las Vistillas. What is now Plaza de la Paja was actually the heart of the city and its main marketplace during the medieval period. In 1617, Plaza Mayor became the hub of Madrid, and it remains a center of evening tourist activity.

ÓPERA AND PALACIO REAL Adjacent to Plaza Mayor and La Latina, this section of Madrid revolves around the Teatro Real, the Plaza de Oriente, and the Palacio Real with its parks and gardens. It forms a buffer zone, of sorts, between Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor, and the uphill, modern district around Gran Vía.

GRAN VÍA AND PLAZA DE ESPAÑA Gran Vía was constructed in the early 20th century to be Madrid's main street. It is flanked by cinemas, department stores, and bank and corporate headquarters. It begins at Plaza de España, with its bronze figures of Don Quixote and his faithful squire, Sancho Panza.

CHUECA This revitalized district north of the Gran Vía includes the main streets of Hortaleza, Infantas, Barquillo, and San Lucas. It is the center of gay nightlife, with dozens of clubs, some superb restaurants, and some of the city's hippest shopping.

ARGÜELLES AND MONCLOA The university area is bounded by the streets of Pintor Rosales, Cea Bermúdez, Bravo Murillo, San Bernardo, and Conde Duque. Students haunt its famous alehouses.

SALAMANCA, RETIRO, AND CHAMBERÍ Ever since Madrid's city walls came down in the 1860s, the district of Salamanca to the north has been the fashionable address. Calle de Serrano cuts through this neighborhood and is lined with stores and boutiques. The street is also home to the U.S. Embassy. The adjacent leafy streets near Parque del Retiro and Chamberí (west of the Paseos) are often lumped with Salamanca because they are also upscale enclaves.

ART DISTRICT AND PASEOS Not a real city district, the Paseos form Madrid's north-south axis, and the street name changes along the way. As it approaches Atocha station, the district is suddenly thick with museums and park amenities. The Museo del Prado and some of the city's more expensive hotels are found here. Many restaurants and other hotels are located along its side streets. In summer, the large medians of the Paseos become open-air terraces filled with animated crowds.

GETTING AROUND

Getting around Madrid is not easy, because everything is spread out. Even many Madrileño taxi drivers (often new arrivals themselves) are unfamiliar with their own city once they're off the main boulevards.

By Subway

The Metro system is quite easy to learn and use. The fare is 1.50€ for a one-way trip, and the central converging point is the Puerta del Sol. The Metro operates from 6am to 2am (try to avoid rush hours). For information, visit www.metromadrid.es, or call ✆ **90-244-44-03.** A 10-trip Metrobus ticket, good on buses and Metro, costs 9.30€.

By Bus

A bus network also services the city and suburbs, with routes clearly shown at each stop on a schematic diagram. Buses are fast and efficient because they travel in special lanes. Both red and blue buses charge 1.50€ per ride. For 9.30€, you can purchase a 10-trip *bonos* ticket (but without transfers) for Madrid's bus system. The ticket is sold at **Empresa Municipal de Transportes,** Calle Cerro de Plata 4 (www.emtmadrid.es; ✆ **91-406-88-00** or 90-250-78-50),

Discount Travel Pass

A discount travel pass for visitors, called **Abono Transporte Turístico,** is the most practical and economical way to travel by public transport in Madrid. This ticket, good for 1, 2, 3, 5, or 7 days, allows for unlimited travel in its designated zones, and purchases can be made at any airport, Metro station, or tourist office. Tickets are sold for two different zones, A and T.

Zone A is good for travel on the Madrid Metro, EMT buses, and Cercanías-RENFE. **Zone T** includes the transport mentioned, plus Interurban buses in greater Madrid, including those going to Toledo. However, this ticket is not valid for RENFE regional train services. The ticket is nontransferable and you must present your passport when purchasing it. Along with ticket instruction (in English), you are given a map of the Metro, Cercanías-RENFE routes, and a map of Madrid indicating Metro stops along with major points of interest.

For Zone A, prices are 6€ for 1 day, 10€ for 2 days, 13€ for 3 days, 19€ for 5 days, and 25€ for a week. For Zone T tickets, fares are 12€ for 1 day, 20€ for 2 days, 25€ for 3 days, 36€ for 5 days, and 50€ for a week. Children 10 years or younger get a 50% discount.

where you can buy a guide to the bus routes. The office is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 2pm.

On Foot

Walking is the best way to really see central Madrid. Use the public transit system to get reasonably close to your destination, then walk the rest of the way. Keep in mind, however, that Madrid is a city built on a hill above a river. The south side of the city (behind Puerta del Sol and Plaza Mayor) slopes strongly down to the Manzanares River and walking can be steep.

By Taxi

Cab fares are pretty reasonable. When you flag down a taxi, the meter should register 2.10€ 6am to 9pm or 2.20€ 9pm to 6am; for every kilometer thereafter, the fare increases between 1€ and 1.20€. A supplement is charged for trips to the railway station or the bullring. The ride to Barajas Airport carries a 5.50€ surcharge, and there is a 2.95€ supplement from railway stations and to or from Juan Carlos I Trade Fair. In addition, a 1.20€ supplement is charged on Sundays and holidays. It's customary to tip at least 10% of the fare.

Warning: Make sure the meter is turned on when you get into a taxi. Otherwise, some drivers assess the cost of the ride, and their assessment, you can be sure, is always more expensive than a metered fare.

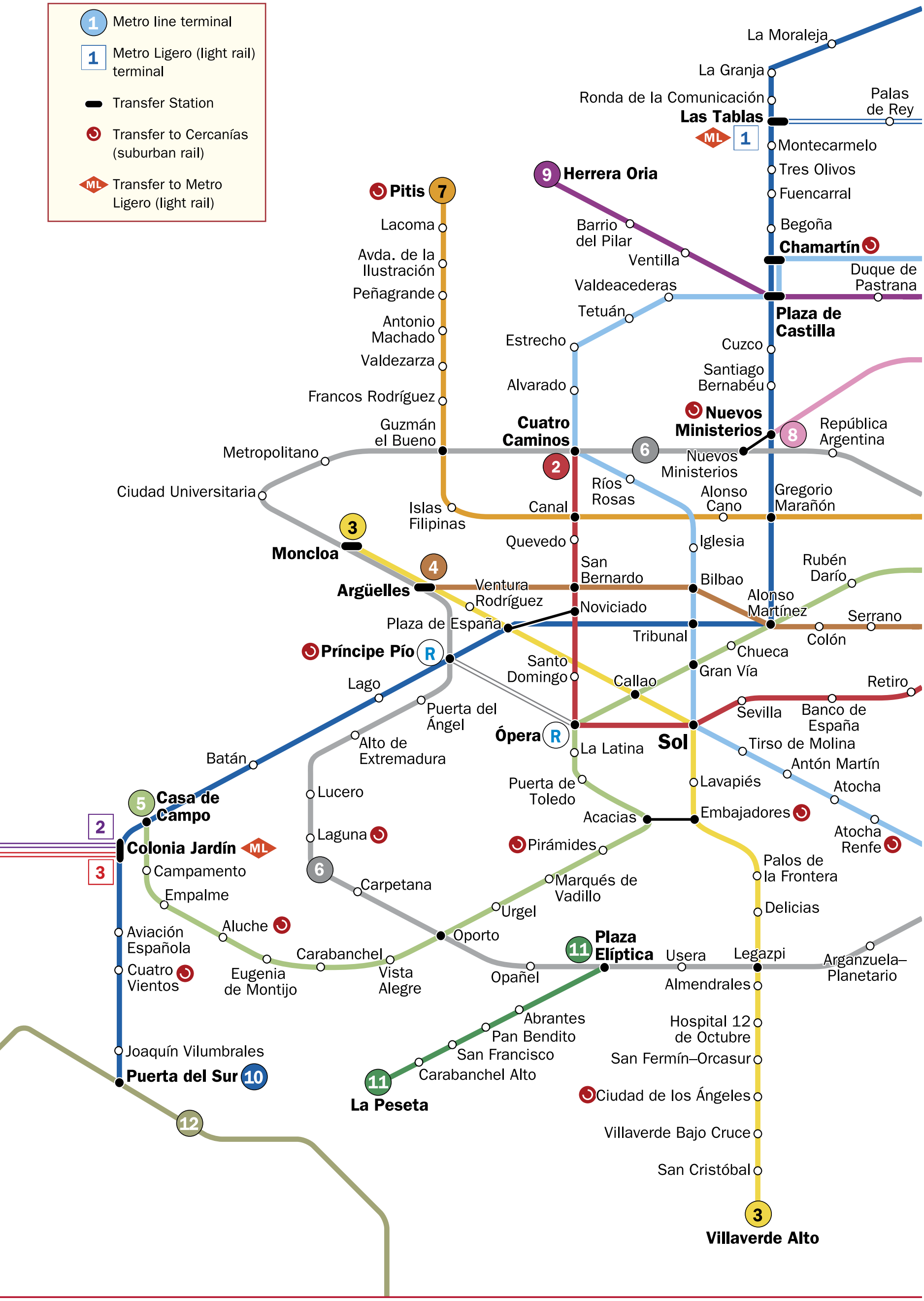
Also, unmetered taxis hire out for the day or the afternoon. They are legitimate, but some drivers operate as gypsy cabs. Because they're not metered, they can charge high rates. They are easy to avoid—always take either a black taxi with horizontal red bands or a white one with diagonal red bands.

If you take a taxi outside the city limits, the driver is entitled to charge you twice the rate shown on the meter.

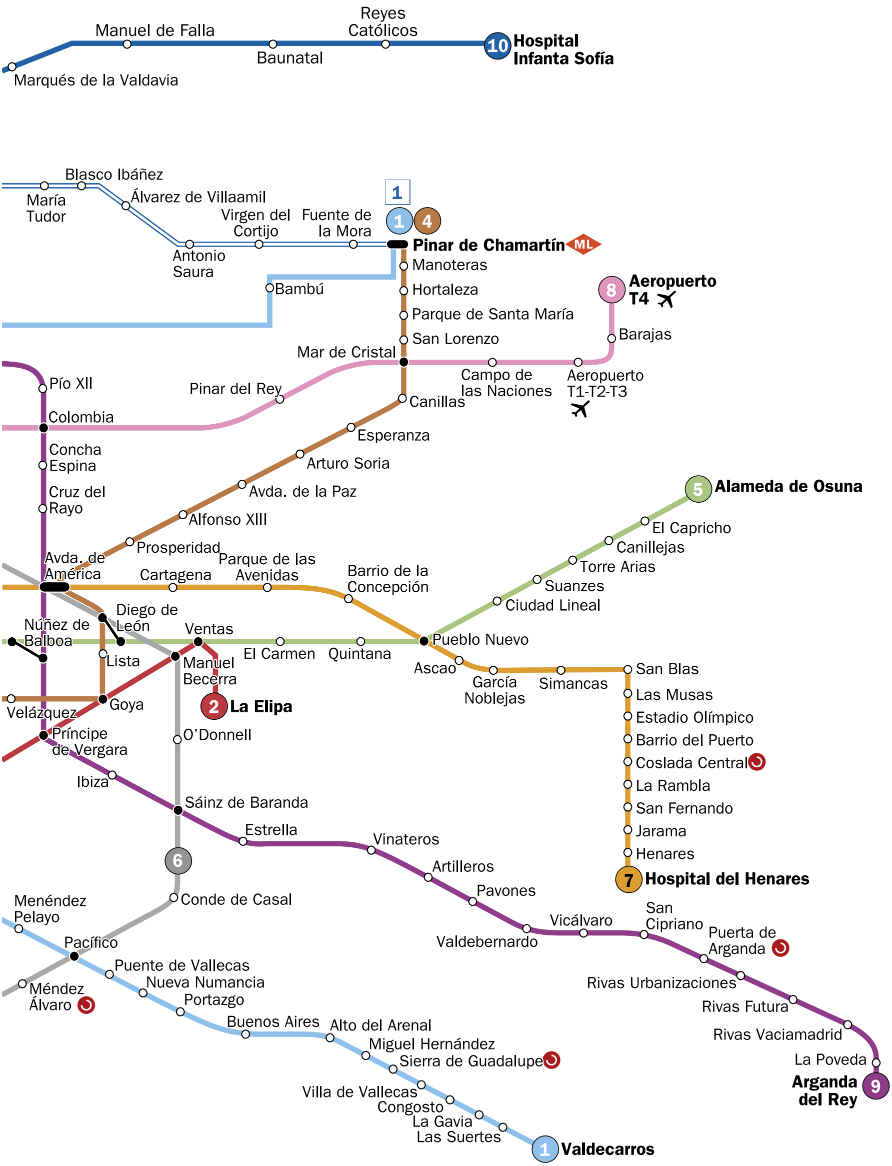
To call a taxi, dial ✆ **91-547-82-00** or 91-405-12-13.

Madrid Metro

- 1 Metro line terminal
- 1 Metro Ligero (light rail) terminal
- ▬ Transfer Station
- ◉ Transfer to Cercanías (suburban rail)
- ML Transfer to Metro Ligero (light rail)



La Moraleja
La Granja
Ronda de la Comunicación
Las Tablas
ML
1
Palas de Rey
Montecarmelo
Tres Olivos
Fuencarral
Begoña
Chamartín
Duque de Pastrana
Plaza de Castilla
9
Herrera Oria
Barrio del Pilar
Ventilla
Valdeacederas
Tetuán
Estrecho
Alvarado
Cuzco
Santiago Bernabéu
Nuevos Ministerios
8
República Argentina
7
Pitis
Lacoma
Avda. de la Ilustración
Peñagrande
Antonio Machado
Valdezarza
Francos Rodríguez
Guzmán el Bueno
Cuatro Caminos
6
Nuevos Ministerios
2
Metropolitano
Ciudad Universitaria
Islas Filipinas
Canal
Ríos Rosas
Alonso Cano
Gregorio Marañón
3
Moncloa
Quevedo
Iglesia
4
Argüelles
Ventura Rodríguez
San Bernardo
Bilbao
Rubén Darío
Alonso Martínez
Noviciado
Plaza de España
Tribunal
Serrano
Colón
Príncipe Pío
R
Chueca
Santo Domingo
Lago
Gran Vía
Callao
Retiro
Puerta del Ángel
Sevilla
Banco de España
Ópera
R
Sol
La Latina
Tirso de Molina
Alto de Extremadura
Batán
Antón Martín
Puerta de Toledo
Lavapiés
Atocha
Lucero
Acacias
Embajadores
Atocha Renfe
5
Casa de Campo
2
Colonia Jardín
ML
3
Laguna
Pirámides
Palos de la Frontera
Campamento
Empalme
6
Carpetana
Marqués de Vadillo
Urgel
Delicias
Aviación Española
Aluche
Oporto
Cuatro Vientos
Carabanchel
Eugenia de Montijo
Vista Alegre
Opañel
11
Plaza Elíptica
Usera
Legazpi
Arganzuela–Planetario
Almendrales
Abrantes
Pan Bendito
San Francisco
Carabanchel Alto
Hospital 12 de Octubre
San Fermín–Orcasur
Joaquín Vilumbrales
Puerta del Sur
10
11
La Peseta
Ciudad de los Ángeles
12
Villaverde Bajo Cruce
San Cristóbal
3
Villaverde Alto



Manuel de Falla
Reyes Católicos
10 Hospital Infanta Sofía
Marqués de la Valdavia
Baunatal
Blasco Ibáñez
María Tudor
Álvarez de Villaamil
Virgen del Cortijo
Fuente de la Mora
Antonio Saura
1
1
4
Pinar de Chamartín
ML
Manoteras
Hortaleza
Parque de Santa María
San Lorenzo
Bambú
8
Aeropuerto T4
Barajas
Mar de Cristal
Campo de las Naciones
Aeropuerto T1-T2-T3
Pío XII
Pinar del Rey
Canillas
Colombia
Esperanza
Concha Espina
Arturo Soria
Cruz del Rayo
Avda. de la Paz
5
Alameda de Osuna
Alfonso XIII
El Capricho
Canillejas
Prosperidad
Torre Arias
Avda. de América
Parque de las Avenidas
Cartagena
Barrio de la Concepción
Suanzes
Ciudad Lineal
Diego de León
Núñez de Balboa
Ventas
Pueblo Nuevo
El Carmen
Quintana
Lista
Manuel Becerra
Ascao
García Noblejas
Simancas
San Blas
2
La Elipa
Las Musas
Goya
Velázquez
Estadio Olímpico
O'Donnell
Príncipe de Vergara
Barrio del Puerto
Coslada Central
La Rambla
Ibiza
Sáinz de Baranda
San Fernando
Jarama
Estrella
Henares
Vinateros
7
Hospital del Henares
Artilleros
6
Pavones
Menéndez Pelayo
Conde de Casal
Vicálvaro
San Cipriano
Valdebernardo
Puerta de Arganda
Pacífico
Puente de Vallecas
Rivas Urbanizaciones
Nueva Numancia
Méndez Álvaro
Portazgo
Rivas Futura
Buenos Aires
Alto del Arenal
Rivas Vaciamadrid
Miguel Hernández
Sierra de Guadalupe
La Poveda
Arganda del Rey
9
Villa de Vallecas
Congosto
La Gavia
Las Suertes
1
Valdecarros

By Car

Driving in congested Madrid always feels like rush hour, although theoretically rush hours are 8 to 10am, 1 to 2pm, and 4 to 6pm Monday to Saturday. Parking is next to impossible except in expensive garages. About the only time you can drive around Madrid with a minimum of hassle is in August, when thousands of Madrileños have taken their cars and headed for Spain's vacation oases. Save your car rentals for excursions from the capital. If you drive into Madrid from another city, ask at your hotel for the nearest garage or parking possibility and leave your vehicle there until you're ready to leave.

For more information on renting a car before you leave home, see p. 750. In addition to its office at Barajas Airport (www.avis.es; ✆ **90-220-01-62**), **Avis** has a main city office at Gran Vía 60 (✆ **91-548-42-04**).

[FastFACTS] MADRID

American Express

Both American Express offices are at the airport, one in Terminal 4 on level 0, the other at Terminal 1 on the second floor. For currency change and other banking needs, these offices are open 24 hours daily.

Babysitters Most major hotels can arrange for babysitters, called *canguros* (literally, kangaroos) or *niñeras*. The concierge usually keeps a list of reliable nursemaids and will contact them for you, provided you give adequate notice. Rates vary considerably but are usually reasonable. Although many babysitters in Madrid speak English, don't count on it.

Currency Exchange

The currency exchange at Chamartín railway station (Metro: Chamartín) is open 24 hours and gives the best rates. If you exchange money at a bank, ask about the commission charged. Many banks in Spain still charge a 1% to 3% commission with a minimum charge of 3€. However, branches of **Banco Santander Central Hispano** charge no commission. Branches of **El Corte Inglés,** the department store chain, offer exchange facilities with varying rates. You get the worst rates at street kiosks such as Chequepoint, Exact Change, and Cambios-Uno. Although they're handy and charge no commission, their rates are very low. Naturally, American Express offices offer the best rates on their own checks. ATMs are plentiful in Madrid.

Dentists For an English-speaking dentist, contact the **U.S. Embassy,** Calle de Serrano 75 (http://spanish.madrid.usembassy.gov; ✆ **91-587-22-40**), which maintains a list of dentists who offer their services to Americans abroad. For dental services, you can also consult **Unidad Médica Anglo-Americana,** Conde de Arandá 1 (www.unidadmedica.com; ✆ **91-435-18-23**). Office hours are Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 10am to 1pm.

Doctors For an English-speaking doctor, contact the **U.S. Embassy,** Calle de Serrano 75 (http://spanish.madrid.usembassy.gov; ✆ **91-587-22-40**).

Drugstores For a late-night pharmacy, look in the daily newspaper under *Farmacias de Guardia* to learn which drugstores are open after 8pm. Another way to find one is to go to any pharmacy, which, even if closed, always posts a list of nearby pharmacies that are open late that day. Madrid has hundreds of pharmacies; one of the most central is **Farmacia**

de la Paloma, Calle de Toledo 46 (✆ **91-365-34-58;** Metro: Puerta del Sol or La Latina).

Embassies & Consulates See "Fast Facts," p. 757.

Emergencies A centralized number for fire, police, and ambulance services is ✆ **112.**

Hospitals & Clinics
Unidad Médica Anglo-Americana, Conde de Arandá 1 (www.unidadmedica.com; ✆ **91-435-18-23;** Metro: Retiro), is not a hospital but a private outpatient clinic offering specialized services. This is not an emergency clinic, although someone on the staff is always available. Unidad Medica Anglo-Americana is open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 10am to 1pm. In a real medical emergency, call ✆ **112** for an ambulance.

Internet Access Internet cafes have sprung up all over the city. Ask at your hotel for the location nearest to where you are staying.

Newspapers & Magazines The Paris-based *International Herald Tribune* is sold at most newsstands in the tourist districts, as is *USA Today,* plus the European editions of *Time* and *Newsweek. Guía del Ocio,* a small magazine sold in newsstands, has entertainment listings and addresses in Spanish. Also for readers of Spanish is *El Pais,* the leading daily newspaper, covering local news, sports, and cultural events (including movie and theater listings).

Police Dial ✆ **112.**

Post Office Madrid's central post office is in the Palacio de Comunicaciones at Plaza de la Cibeles (✆ **91-523-06-94**). Hours are Monday to Friday 8:30am to 9:30pm and Saturday 8:30am to 2pm.

Safety Madrid has not been exempt from the generalized anxiety expressed by American officials. The U.S. Embassy warns visitors to leave valuables in hotel safes or other secure places before going out. Take your passport with you anyway, as you may need it to change money or present identification to the police. The embassy advises against carrying purses and suggests that you keep valuables in front pockets and carry only enough cash for the day's needs. Be aware of those around you and keep a separate record of your passport number, traveler's check numbers, and credit card numbers.

As in every crowded city around the world, purse snatching is common. Criminals often work in pairs, grabbing purses from pedestrians, cyclists, and even cars. A popular scam involves one robber smearing the back of the victim's clothing, perhaps with mustard, ice cream, or something worse. An accomplice then pretends to help clean up the mess, all the while picking the victim's pockets.

Every car—parked or stopped at a light—can be a target; don't leave anything in sight in your car. If a vehicle is standing still, a thief may open the door or break a window to snatch a purse or package, even from under the seat. Place valuables in the trunk when you park, and always assume that someone is watching to see whether you're putting something away for safekeeping. Keep the car locked while driving.

Taxes There are no special city taxes for tourists, except for the value-added tax (VAT, known as IVA in Spain) levied nationwide on all goods and services, ranging from 8% to 18%.

Telephones See "Fast Facts," p. 763.

Toilets Some public restrooms are available, notably in the Parque del Retiro and on Plaza de Oriente across from the Palacio Real. Otherwise, you can go into a bar or *tasca,* but order some food or drink. All major department stores, such as Galerías Preciados and El Corte Inglés, have good, clean restrooms.

Transit Information
For bus or Metro information, visit www.ctm-madrid.es or call ✆ **91-580-42-60.**

EXPLORING MADRID

The main sightseeing attractions of Madrid tend to cluster by dynasty. The Palacio Royal, the religious sights, and the Plaza Mayor lie in the part of Madrid built by the Habsburgs—that is, near Sol and Ópera Metro stops. The once-residential neighborhood uphill from Puerta del Sol dates from the same era, and contains the attractions of the Barrio de las Letras.

The Bourbon dynasty attractions include all the major art museums, which lie within a few blocks of the Atocha Metro stop. Note that the Paseo del Arte pass (about 15€) provides discounted admission to the big three: the Prado, the Reina Sofía, and the Thyssen-Bornemisza. Almost all the museums in this book have free admission for at least a few hours each week. If you are in town long enough to take advantage of these times, you might want to plan sightseeing accordingly. Typically, many museums are closed Mondays, and most are closed December 24 and 25, December 31, January 1, January 6, May 1, May 15, and November 9.

Puerta del Sol & Las Letras

Casa de Lope de Vega 🎁 HISTORIC HOME This time capsule introduces visitors to one of the great rascals of all time, and even if the structure has been heavily modified over the years, it gives a chance to see how Madrileños lived in the 17th century. One of the great writers who gave the Barrio de las Letras its name, Félix Lope de Vega y Carpio (1562–1635), lived here. He was astonishingly prolific—his 425 surviving plays are estimated to be only a third of his output. But this "lover, writer, husband, and priest," as the guides at his house-museum call him, did everything to excess. He married three times, fathered innumerable children (some inside wedlock, some outside), and was frequently sued for his amorous pursuits. Yet he became a priest at age 50, and had a window installed in his bedroom overlooking the altar of his chapel. The house was badly damaged in the Civil War, and the subsequent restoration takes some liberties with strictly historical interpretation. Lope de Vega wouldn't have minded—as long as the audience applauded.

Cervantes, 11. ✆ **91-429-92-16.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Antón Martín. Bus: 6, 9, 10, 14, 26, 27, 32, 34, 37, 45, or 57.

Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Fine Arts Museum) ART MUSEUM An easy stroll from Puerta del Sol, the Fine Arts Museum is located in the restored and remodeled 17th-century baroque palace of Juan de Goyeneche. The collection—more than 1,500 paintings and 570 sculptures, ranging from the 16th century to the present—was started in 1752 during the reign of Fernando VI (1746–59), and organized by Goya himself. It emphasizes works by Spanish, Flemish, and Italian artists. You can see masterpieces by El Greco, Rubens, Velázquez, Zurbarán, Ribera, Cano, Coello, Murillo, Goya, and Sorolla.

Alcalá 13. http://rabasf.insde.es. ✆ **91-524-08-64.** Admission 5€ adults, 2.50€ students, free for children 17 and under; free for all visitors Wed. Tues–Sat 9am–3pm; Sun 9am–2:30pm. Metro: Sol or Sevilla. Bus: 3, 5, 15, 20, 51, 52, 53, or 150.

Plaza Santa Ana ★ SQUARE Sooner or later you will have a drink on Plaza Santa Ana, and you'll probably wonder what took you so long. The neighborhood has been Madrid's theater district for roughly the last 400 years, as open-air

AN EARLY-EVENING tapeo

Spaniards stave off their hunger until the 10pm dinner hour by indulging in the early-evening *tapeo*—the Spanish equivalent of a pub-crawl but with far more food. You stroll from bar to bar, cafe to cafe, *tasca* to *tasca,* having a drink and a bite at each, and meeting old friends and making new ones. Although tapas are now endemic in Spain (in Basque Country they're called *pintxos*), they seem to have evolved in the sherry country of western Andalucía. The first *tapa* (or so culinary legend goes) was probably a piece of dried bread with a thin slice of chorizo sausage or air-dried ham on top. It went over the glass of sherry to keep out the flies.

Tapas can be relatively simple: toasted almonds, olives, or slices of *jamón serrano,* Manchego cheese, or blood sausage. Some of the most ubiquitous include slices of *tortilla española* (potato omelet), *pimientos rellenos* (peeled red peppers stuffed with tuna or cod), and *croquetas* (small fritters of thick béchamel sauce enrobing bits of ham, tuna, or cod).

Some of our favorite tapas are the specialties of small bars around Plaza Santa Ana:

Patatas bravas were supposedly invented at **Las Bravas,** Espoz y Mina 13 (✆ **91-521-35-07;** daily 1pm–1am; cash only; Metro: Sevilla). They are potatoes par-boiled in brine, then deep-fried in olive oil and served with a spicy paprika sauce patented by the restaurant.

Jamón ibérico is the *ne-plus-ultra* of Spanish hams, and the top grade is marked "5J," or *cinco jotas.* At **Méson Cinco Jotas,** Plaza Santa Ana 1 (www.mesoncincojotas.com; ✆ **91-522-63-64;** daily noon–1am; Metro: Antón Martín), you can order the simple slices of *ibérico,* or opt for less expensive sausages made from the same prime pigs.

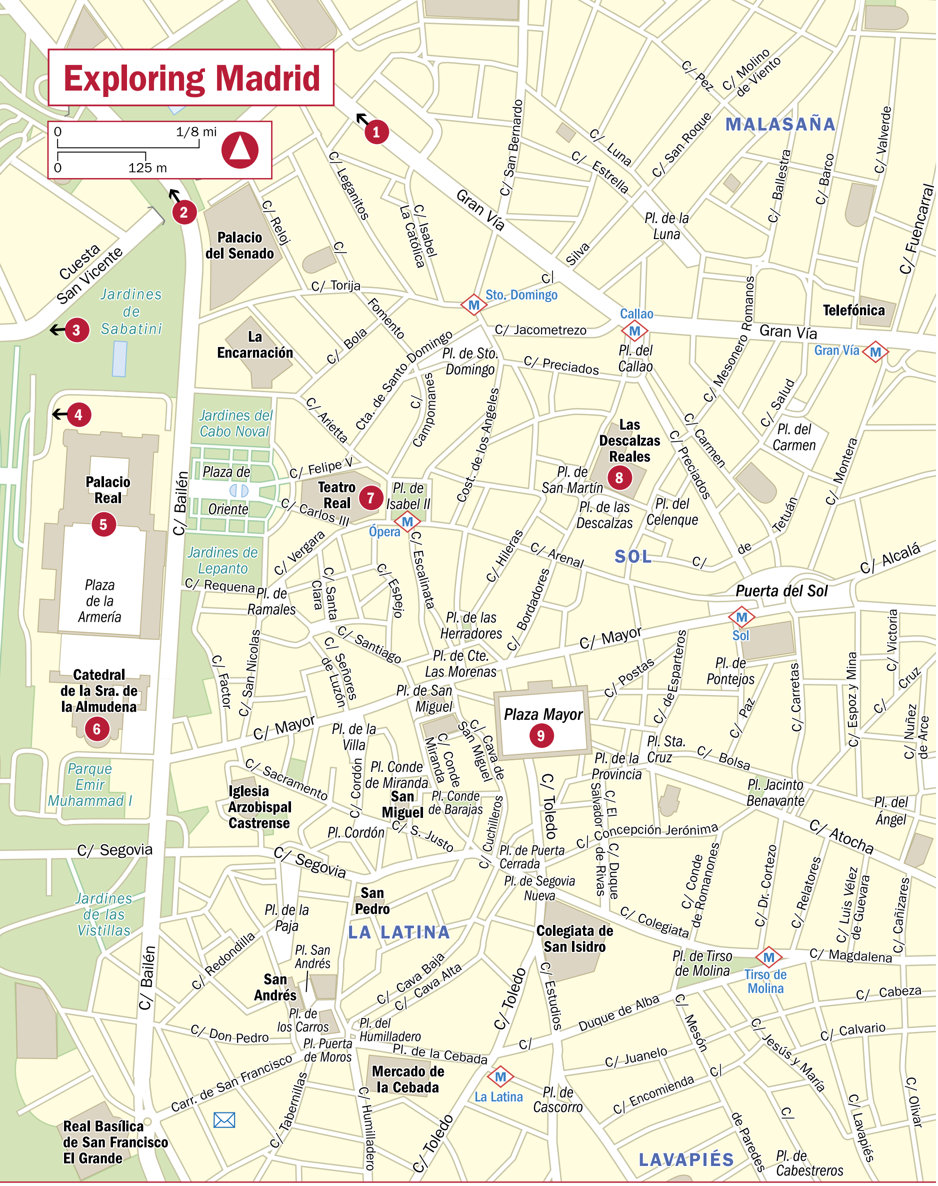
Gambas a la plancha (shrimp grilled in their shells) are the very Andalucían specialty of the original 1906 location of **La Casa del Abuelo,** Victoria 12 (www.lacasadelabuelo.es; ✆ **91-521-23-19;** daily 1:30pm–1am; Metro: Sevilla). You can also get the shrimp sizzled with garlic, or breaded and fried in olive oil.

Trucha ahumada (trout) is the default order at **La Trucha,** Manuel Fernández y González 3 (✆ **91-429-58-33;** daily noon–1am; Metro: Antón Martín), just off the northeast corner of Plaza Santa Ana. Get a single slice on toast to see if you like it, or order an entire plate if you already know.

theaters on the spot produced the plays of Lope de Vega (who lived nearby) and other satirists. The **Teatro Español** was erected here in the mid–19th century, and made Plaza Santa Ana as hip then as it is now. Because it made the area an entertainment district, dozens of bars and cafes popped up. They still represent one of the city's top tapas scenes. The theater continues to anchor the east side of the square and presents performances of dance, orchestral, and chamber music, as well as live theater.

Teatro Espanol, Principe 25. www.teatroespanol.es. ✆ **91-360-14-84.** Metro: Antón Martín or Tirso de Molina. Bus: 6, 9, 10, 14, 26, 27, 32, 34, 37, 45, or 57.

Exploring Madrid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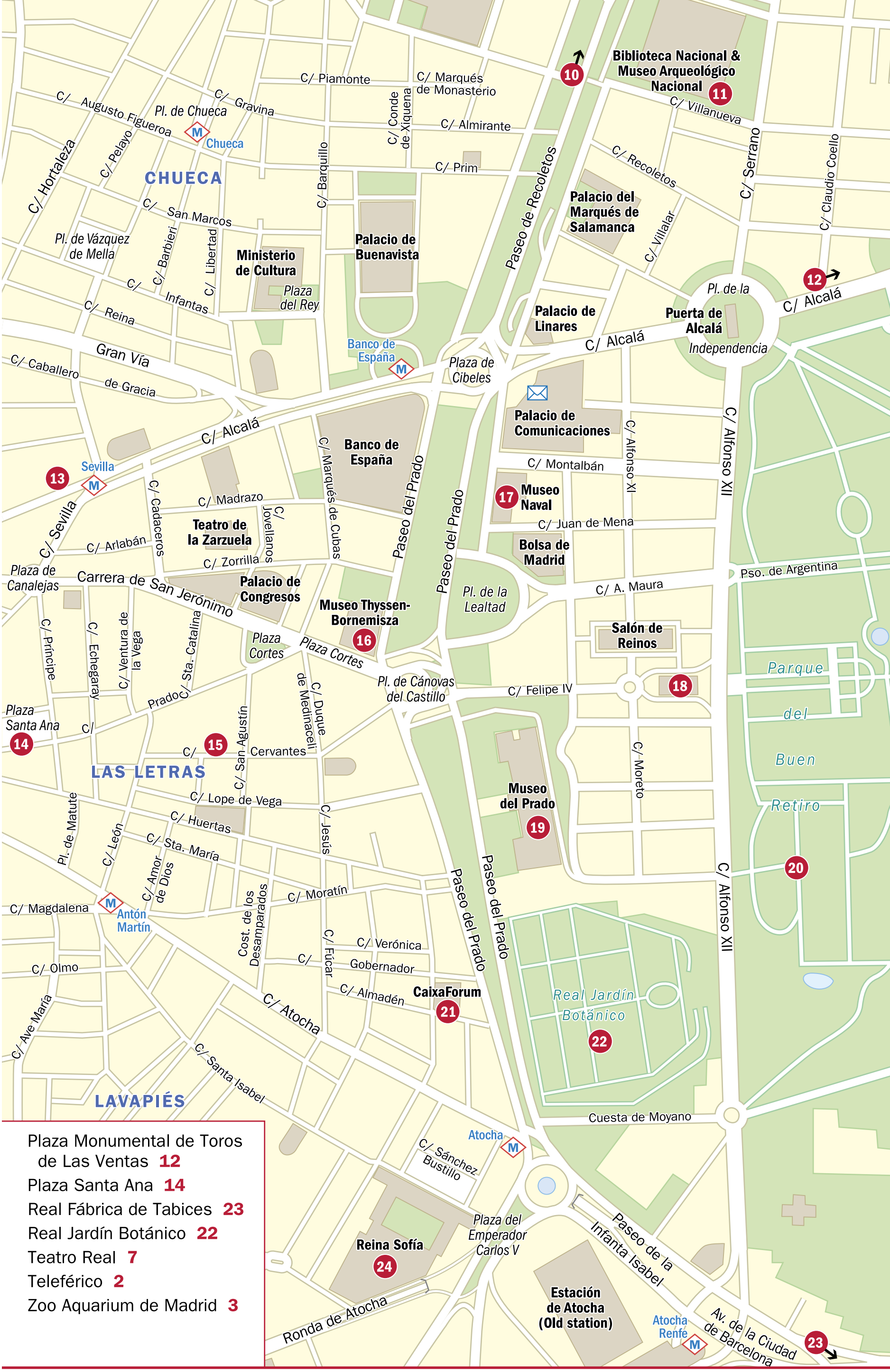
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Plaza Mayor & La Latina

Plaza Mayor ★★★ ☺ SQUARE Plaza Mayor, in the heart of Madrid near the Puerta del Sol Metro stop, is the city's most famous square, and it can also be one of its most vibrant. During warm weather, the restaurants under the arcades set out cafe tables, musicians and other street performers abound, and small children chase the pigeons while their parents eat, drink, and smoke.

The square has a history as the central gathering spot for Madrileños, who would come here to watch bullfights, celebrate festivals, and, during the reign of the Habsburgs, witness public confessions and executions under the Spanish Inquisition. The original architect of Plaza Mayor was Juan Gómez de Mora, who worked during the reign of Felipe III.

Three times the buildings on the square burned—in 1631, 1672, and 1790—but each time the plaza bounced back. After the last big fire it was completely redesigned by Juan de Villanueva. Nowadays, a Christmas fair is held around the equestrian statue of Felipe III (dating from 1616) in the center of the square.

Metro: Sol or Ópera.

The changing of the Royal Guard in Plaza Mayor.

Ópera & Palacio Real

Catedral de la Almudena CATHEDRAL Political conflicts, wars, and a simple lack of money led to incredible delays in the building of Madrid's cathedral. Construction began in 1883, but it took 110 years for this cathedral to officially open. It's named after the Virgen de la Almudena, whose icon was found during the Reconquest on this site (which, incidentally, housed Madrid's first Muslim mosque). Originally planned in the neo-Gothic style, it was subsequently changed to neoclassical by the architect Fernando Chueca. The "pop art" stained-glass windows and multicolored ceiling, along with the grand Grezing organ, graced the wedding of Prince Felipe to newscaster Doña Letizia in May 2004, the first royal wedding in nearly a century.

The dome of the Catedral de la Almudena.

Calle Bailén 10. ✆ **91-542-22-00.** Free admission. Summer daily 10am–1pm and 6–8pm; off season daily 9am–9pm. Metro: Ópera.

Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales ★★ CONVENT In the mid–16th century, aristocratic women—either disappointed in love or wanting to be the "bride of Christ"—stole away to this convent to take the veil. Each brought a dowry, making this one of the richest convents in the land. By the mid–20th century, the convent sheltered mostly poor women. True, it still contained a priceless collection of art treasures, but the sisters were forbidden to auction anything, so they were literally starving. The state intervened, and the pope granted special dispensation to open the convent as a museum. Today, the public can look behind the walls of what was once a mysterious edifice on one of the most beautiful squares in Old Madrid.

In the reliquary are the noblewomen's dowries, one of which is said to contain bits of wood from the True Cross; another, bones of San Sebastían. The most valuable painting is Titian's *Caesar's Money.* The Flemish Hall shelters other fine works, including paintings by Hans de Beken and Bruegel the Elder. All the tapestries were based on Rubens's cartoons, displaying his chubby matrons. Be warned that the tours are not in English, but there is much to see even if you don't speak Spanish. Allot 1 hour for a visit here.

Plaza de las Descalzas Reales s/n. www.patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **91-454-88-00.** Admission 7€ adults, 4€ children 5–16, free for children 4 and under. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Ópera. Bus: 3, 25, 39, or 148. From Plaza del Callao, off Gran Vía, walk down Postigo de San Martín to Plaza de las Descalzas Reales; the convent is on the left.

Palacio Real (Palacio Royal) ★★ PALACE This huge palace was begun in 1738 on the site of the Madrid Alcázar, which burned to the ground in 1734. Some of its 2,000 rooms—which that "enlightened despot" Charles III called home—are open to the public; others are still used for state business. The palace was last used as a royal residence in 1931, before King Alfonso XIII and his wife, Victoria Eugénie, fled Spain.

Highlights of a visit include the Reception Room, State Apartments, Armory, and Royal Pharmacy. The **Reception Room** and **State Apartments** should get priority here if you're rushed. They include a rococo room with a diamond-studded clock; a porcelain salon; the Royal Chapel; the Banquet Room, where receptions for heads of state are still held; and the sumptuous Throne Room.

The Palacio Real, or Royal Palace.

The rooms are literally stuffed with art treasures and antiques—salon after salon of monumental grandeur, with no apologies for the damask, mosaics, Tiepolo ceilings, gilt and bronze, chandeliers, and paintings.

In the **Armory,** you'll see the finest collection of medieval and Renaissance weaponry in Spain. Many of the items—powder flasks, shields, lances, helmets, and saddles—are from the collection of Carlos V. From here, the comprehensive tour takes you into the Royal Pharmacy. Afterward, stroll through the **Campo del Moro,** the palace gardens. Plan to spend about 1½ hours here.

Tip: If your visit falls on the first Wednesday of the month, look for the changing-of-the-guard ceremony, which occurs at noon and is free to the public.

Plaza de Oriente, Calle de Bailén 2. www.patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **91-454-88-00.** Admission 10€ adults, 5€ students and children 16 and under. Oct–Mar daily 10am–6pm; Apr–Sept daily 10am–8pm. Metro: Ópera or Plaza de España. Bus: 3, 25, 39, or 148.

Salamanca, Retiro & Chamberí

Museo Lázaro Galdiano ★ 🎁 MUSEUM Often compared to New York's Frick Museum, this house of art is a showplace for the holdings of Don José Lázaro Galdiano (1862–1947), a Gilded Age banker, writer, and collector known as "the Renaissance man of Madrid." He collected art by some of the greatest Spanish masters, including El Greco, Velázquez, Zurbarán, Ribera, Murillo, and Valdés-Leal. The Prado has its masterpieces, but the lesser works of these artists are worth viewing, too. One small painting by Goya prefigured the famous "black paintings" in the Prado. One section is devoted to works by the English portrait and landscape artists Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Constable. Italian artists are represented by Tiepolo and Guardi, among others. In addition to art, an array of goodies includes 15th-century hand-woven vestments, swords and daggers, royal seals, 16th-century crystal from Limoges, Byzantine jewelry, Italian bronzes from ancient times to the Renaissance, and medieval armor.

Inside the Museo Lázaro Galdiano.

Topiaries in the Parque del Retiro.

Calle de Serrano 122. www.flg.es. ✆ **91-561-6084.** Admission 6€ adults, 3€ students and seniors, free for children 12 and under; free for all Mon and Wed–Sat 3:30–4:30pm, Sun 2–3pm. Mon and Wed–Sat 10am–4:30pm; Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Rubén Darío. Bus: 9, 12, 16, 19, 27, 45, or 51.

Museo Sorolla ★★ ART MUSEUM Valencia-born Joachín Sorolla (1863–1923) was one of Spain's sunniest painters, known for rendering landscapes, seascapes, and even portraits with saturated colors. His spirit inhabits this magical studio-museum in the Andalucían-style house he built from 1911 to 1917. Unfinished paintings on easels in his studio create the illusion that the painter will be back in a few minutes to add more brushstrokes. The downstairs rooms—filled with slightly faded family photographs—reflect the domestic life of a painter serene in his good fortune, his talent, and his fame. Upstairs galleries form a more conventional museum organized by theme. His society portraits rely frankly on compositions from Velázquez, and his folkloric paintings are truly charming. But the painter from the Levante was at his best on the seashore, charging his canvases of waves, rocks, and sandy beaches with a vibrant, often erotic, passion.

General Martínez Campos 37. http://museosorolla.mcu.es. ✆ **91-310-15-84.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students, free for children 17 and under; free for all visitors Sun. Tues–Sat 9:30am–8pm; Sun and holidays 10am–3pm. Metro: Iglesia, Gregorio Marañón, or Rubén Darío. Bus: 5, 7, 14, 16, 27, 40, 45, 61, 147, or 150.

Parque del Retiro ★★ ☺ PARK/GARDEN To meet Madrileños at their most relaxed, plan to spend a Sunday among the families enjoying Parque del Retiro. Originally a royal playground for the Spanish monarchs and their guests, the park covers 140 hectares (346 acres), but most of the main attractions are located adjacent to the central pathway. Join families rowing in rental rowboats on the small lake and watch the children with bags of potato chips entranced at the puppet shows on the grass.

There are two exposition centers, the Velázquez and Crystal palaces (built to honor the Philippines in 1887). The latter is a great glass house, wondrous in its impracticality. The exceedingly baroque lakeside monument was erected in 1922 to King Alfonso XII. You can smell the rose gardens even before you see them.

Free admission. Summer daily 7am to midnight; winter daily 7am–10pm. Metro: Retiro.

Argüelles & Moncloa

Museo de América (Museum of the Americas) 🎁 MUSEUM Although the late-18th-century Spanish monarch Carlos III devoted much of his reign to construction projects in Madrid, he was a quintessential Enlightenment monarch who made time to assemble a "cabinet" of curiosities from Spain's colonies in the Americas. This modern museum's collection of 25,000 objects gathered during archaeological and scientific expeditions is an outgrowth of the Spanish fascination with the New World. The collection contains many works that New World museums seriously covet, including Mayan stone carvings, Incan textiles, Mexican pottery, and the Códice Tudela, a 16th-century manuscript with Mayan drawings and text by a Spanish missionary. But the Museo de América has moved well beyond the mere display of curiosities. Exhibits balance the excitement and adventure of discovery with sensitive portrayals of New World cultures that would be forever changed by the encounters. The museum building itself is reminiscent of New World Spanish structures, with an arched entry, baroque tower, and central courtyard.

Av. de los Reyes Católicos 6. http://museodeamerica.mcu.es. ✆ **91-549-26-41.** Admission 3€; free for children 17 and under, free for all visitors Sun. Tues–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm; Sun and holidays 10am–3pm. Metro: Moncloa. Bus: 1, 2, 16, 44, 46, 61, 82, 113, 132, or 133.

Museo del Traje 🎁 MUSEUM There is a real poignancy about some of the displays at this "costume" museum that traces the evolution of Spanish style. Because fabrics are so perishable, few examples of Spanish clothing before the 18th century survive. The exhibits, which cover circa 1800 to the present, are set up in a maze inside a cavernous dark room, with each display lit brightly enough to see, but not brightly enough to further damage the fabrics. The path recapitulates the history of Spanish costume from folkloric peasant clothes through the rustling silks and stiff corsets of the 19th century to brilliant modern designers like Balenciaga. It is a lesson in the nexus of fashion and history.

Av. Jean de Herrera 2. http://museodeltraje.mcu.es. ✆ **91-550-47-00.** Admission 3€, free for children 17 and under; free for all visitors Sat 2:30–7pm and all day Sun. Tues–Sat 9:30am–7pm; Sun and holidays 10am–3pm. Metro: Moncola. Bus: 46, 82, 83, 132, or 133.

Teleférico ☺ OBSERVATION TRAM Strung high above several of Madrid's verdant parks, this aerial tramway was originally built in 1969 as part of a public fairgrounds (Parque de Atracciones, p. 95) vaguely modeled on Disneyland. Today, even for visitors not interested in the park, the Teleférico retains an allure of its own as a high-altitude method of admiring the cityscape of Madrid. The cable car departs for the 11-minute ride from Paseo Pintor Rosales at the eastern edge of **Parque del Oeste** (at the corner of Calle Marqués de Urquijo); it carries you high above two parks and railway tracks and over the Manzanares River to a spot near a picnic ground and restaurant in Casa de Campo. Weather permitting, there are good views of the Palacio Royal along the way.

The Teleférico.

Paseo del Pintor Rosales. www.teleferico.com. ✆ **91-541-74-50.** Fare 3.70€ one-way, 5.35€ round-trip. Jan Sat–Sun noon–6:30pm; Feb Sat–Sun noon–7pm; Mar and Oct Sat–Sun noon–7:30pm (shorter hours during holidays); Apr Mon–Fri noon–6:30pm, Sat–Sun noon–8pm; May Mon–Fri noon–2pm, Sat–Sun noon–8:30pm; June–Aug Mon–Fri noon–9pm, Sat–Sun noon–9:30pm; Sept Mon–Fri noon–8pm, Sat–Sun noon–8:30pm; Nov–Dec Sat–Sun noon–6pm.

Art District & Paseos

CaixaForum ★ 🎁 ART MUSEUM Madrid's so-called triangle of great art—the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza, and Reina Sofía—has become a quartet. Swiss architects Pierre de Meuron and Jacques Herzog, who transformed a factory into the Tate Modern in London, have taken a 1901 power station in Madrid and created an art complex. The museum, with both its permanent collection and its ever-changing exhibitions, showcases some of the most avant-garde art in Iberia.

The new museum is also home to film screenings and free concerts. The permanent collection includes stunning, often daring paintings from the foundation's permanent archives, including works by such artists as Cindy Sherman, Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, Carlos Armorales, Roni Horn, and Ferrán García Sevilla. On top of the former electrical plant, the architects created a two-story addition in oxidized steel, making more space for galleries and a cafe overlooking Paseo del Prado.

Paseo del Prado 36. http://obrasocial.lacaixa.es/nuestroscentros/caixaforummadrid/caixaforummadrid_es.html. ✆ **91-330-73-00.** Free admission. Daily 10am–8pm. Metro: Atocha or Banco de España.

Museo Arqueológico Nacional ★★ 🏷 MUSEUM This stately mansion is a storehouse of artifacts from the prehistoric to the baroque. One of the prime exhibits here is the Iberian statue *La Dama de Elche,* a sophisticated Iberian carving (4th c. B.C.) discovered on the southeastern coast of Spain. Finds from Ibiza, Paestum, and Rome are on display, including statues of Tiberius and his mother, Livia. The Islamic collection from Spain is outstanding. There are also collections of Spanish Renaissance lusterware, Talavera pottery, Retiro porcelain, and rare 16th- and 17th-century Andalucían tiles and glassware.

Many of the exhibits are treasures that were removed from churches and monasteries. A much-photographed choir stall from the palace of Palencia dates from the 14th century. Also worth a look are the reproductions of the 15,000-year-old Altamira cave paintings (chiefly of bison, horses, and boars), discovered near Santander in northern Spain in 1868.

Serrano 13. http://man.mcu.es. ✆ **91-577-79-12.** Free admission. Tues–Sat 9:30am–8pm; Sun and holidays 9:30am–3pm. Metro: Serrano or Colón. Bus: 1, 9, 19, 51, or 74.

Museo del Prado ★★★ ART MUSEUM With more than 7,000 paintings, the Prado is one of the most important repositories of art in the world. It began as a royal collection and was enhanced by the Habsburgs, especially Charles V, and later by the Bourbons. For paintings of the Spanish school, the Prado has no equal; on your first visit, concentrate on the Spanish masters (Velázquez, Goya, El Greco, and Murillo).

El Greco (ca. 1541–1614) was born in Crete, and although he spent most of his life working in Toledo, the Prado considered him a "foreign" artist and did not begin collecting his work until the 20th century. Given the late start, the museum managed to acquire some striking canvases, and you can see a parade of

The Prado.

the Greek's saints, Madonnas, and Holy Families—even a ghostly *John the Baptist*.

You'll find a splendid array of works by the incomparable Diego Velázquez (1599–1660). The museum's most famous painting, in fact, is his *Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor)*, a triumph in its use of light effects and perspective. The faces of the queen and king are reflected in the mirror in the painting itself. The artist in the foreground is Velázquez, of course.

Also worthy is the work of José Ribera (1591–1652), a Valencia-born artist and contemporary of Velázquez whose best painting is *Martyrdom of St. Philip*.

Prado Masterpieces Not to Miss

- **El Greco: *The Resurrection,* Gallery 9b.** This extremely vertical canvas painted from 1596 to 1600 for the main altar of the Church of the School of Maria in Aragón echoes El Greco's Byzantine roots, yet brings the expressiveness of Italian Renaissance painting to Spain. The borders of the canvas show the priming and indicate where El Greco tested his colors before painting.
- **Goya: *The 3rd of May 1808 in Madrid: The Executions on Principe Pio Hill,* Gallery 64.** One of the greatest examples of Goya as polemicist, this 1814 depiction of the execution of Spanish patriots by Napoleon's soldiers makes use of almost theatrical lighting to reveal the psychological state of the Spanish heroes.
- **Velázquez: *The Family of Felipe IV,* or *Las Meninas,* Gallery 12.** Created around 1656, this is the most famous painting by Velázquez. As much a painting of light and space as of its subject, it is also a deeply psychological work and even includes a self-portrait of the painter. Note the king and queen reflected in the mirror at the back of the room, further complicating the space.

Goya or Not, *The Milkmaid* & *The Colossus* Are Still Great Art

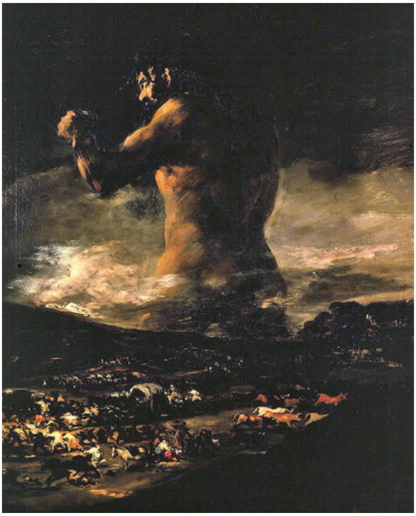
Spain's most fabled museum, the Prado, shocked the art world—and visitors, too—when it announced that two of its most famous paintings, *The Milkmaid of Bordeaux* and *The Colossus,* attributed to Francisco de Goya, are not in fact the work of the Spanish master. Goya specialists agree. The paintings still hang in the Prado, although they are now "attributed" to Goya instead of "by" Goya. Want to see some real Goyas? The Prado has some 150 actual paintings by the artist. Some Goya experts question the authorship of other "supposed" Goyas, especially several portraits. There was such a market for Goyas at the turn of the 20th century that many art dealers—surprise—kept discovering "long-lost" Goyas.

The Sevilla-born Bartolomé Murillo (1617–82)—often referred to as the "painter of Madonnas"—has three versions of the Immaculate Conception on display.

Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) ranks along with Velázquez and El Greco in the trio of great Spanish artists. Hanging here are his unflattering portraits of his patron, Charles IV, and his family, as well as the *Clothed Maja* and the *Naked Maja.* You can see the much-reproduced *Third of May* (1808), plus a series of Goya sketches (some of which, depicting the decay of 18th-c. Spain, brought the Inquisition down on the artist) and his expressionistic "black paintings."

If time allows, check out some of the museum's other major collections. Major Italian works are exhibited on the ground floor. You'll see art by Italian masters—Raphael, Botticelli, Mantegna, Andrea del Sarto, Fra Angelico, and Correggio. The most celebrated Italian painting here is Titian's voluptuous Venus being watched by a musician who can't keep his eyes on his work. The Prado also has an outstanding collection of the work of Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), the Flemish genius. *The Garden of Earthly Delights,* the best-known work of "El Bosco," is here. You'll also see his *Seven Deadly Sins* and his triptych *The Hay Wagon. The Triumph of Death* is by another Flemish painter, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525–69), who carried on Bosch's ghoulish vision.

In a massive expansion launched by the Prado, at the cost of 152€ million, the museum has even made room for children's workshops. Much of the expansion is buried underground. The main structure from 1785 is linked underground to the Prado's modern annex; the passageway runs beneath a garden and a plaza. The Prado has also branched out to incorporate surrounding buildings,



The Colossus (1808–12), attributed to Goya.

including the Casón del Buen Retiro overlooking Parque del Retiro. It is filled with the work of 19th-century Spanish painters. The Prado grew by 50% with this expansion, the largest single growth in the 2-century history of the museum. The expansion includes several galleries, a restaurant, a lecture hall, and a gift shop.

Temporary exhibitions, often highlighting new acquisitions, are mounted in the self-effacing addition designed by Rafael Moneo. The highlight of the new building is a bright, airy room containing the reassembled cloister of the adjacent San Jéronimo church. The expansion allows the Prado to display 1,000 Goya prints in a low-light gallery. Give yourself at least 3 hours here; you could spend a week.

Paseo del Prado. www.museoprado.es. ✆ **91-330-28-00.** Admission 12€ adults, 6€ E.U. seniors, free for students and children 17 and under, and free for all visitors Tues–Sat 6–8pm, Sun 5–8pm. Tues–Sun 9am–8pm; holidays 9am–2pm. Call for info on guided tours. Closed Jan 1, Good Friday, May 1, and Dec 25. Metro: Atocha or Banco de España. Bus: 9, 10, 14, 19, 27, 34, 37, or 45.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía ★★ 🏷 ART MUSEUM What the Prado is to traditional art, this museum is to modern art: the greatest repository of 20th- to 21st-century works in Spain. Set within the echoing, futuristically renovated walls of the former General Hospital, originally built between 1776 and 1781, the museum is a sprawling, high-ceilinged showplace. Once designated "the ugliest building in Spain" by Catalán architect Oriol Bohigas, the Reina Sofía's design hangs in limbo somewhere between the 18th and the 21st centuries.

Special emphasis is paid to the great artists of 20th-century Spain: Juan Gris, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso. What many critics consider Picasso's masterpiece, ***Guernica,*** now rests at this museum after a long and troubled history of traveling. Banned in Spain during Franco's era (Picasso refused to allow it to be displayed here anyway), it hung until 1980 at New York's Museum of Modern Art. The fiercely antiwar painting immortalizes the town's shameful blanket bombing by the German Luftwaffe, which was fighting for Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Guernica was the cradle of the Basque nation, and Picasso's canvas made it a household name around the world.

After a 90€-million expansion (2004–09), the museum now better accommodates its ever-increasing collection of contemporary art. With its latest space, Reina Sofía enters the world-class rank of modern museums, rivaling the Centre Pompidou, in Paris. The new complex is devoted to more than just paintings and includes a 450-seat auditorium for concerts and a 350,000-volume reference library. A third building contains two mammoth galleries for large-scale exhibitions. Allot about 1½ hours here.

Santa Isabel 52. www.museoreinasofia.es. ✆ **91-774-10-00.** Admission 6€ adults, free for students and children 17 and under, free for all Mon–Fri 7–9pm, Sat 2:30–9pm, and Sun. Mon and Wed–Sat 10am–9pm; Sun 10am–2:30pm. Metro: Atocha. Bus: 6, 10, 14, 19, 26, 27, 32, 34, 36, or 37.

Museo Naval ☺ 🏷 MUSEUM You'll have to show your passport to enter this museum on the first floor of the Spanish Navy Headquarters, but the hassle is worth it. The maps, paintings, nautical instruments, and ship models offer a fascinating overview of Spain's maritime pursuits. Exhibits begin with the discovery and exploration of the Americas, including a scale model of Columbus's tiny

MUSEO
THYSSEN
BORNEMISZA
LA SIMERA

The entrance to the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.

flagship, the *Santa Maria*. The museum's most treasured artifact is Juan de la Cosa's 1500 handwritten map of the New World. The central patio is devoted to shipbuilding during the 18th century, when Spain and England battled it out on the high seas. For a glimpse of shipboard life, don't miss the re-creations of the wardroom of a 16th-century frigate and the 19th-century cabin of a ship commander.

Paseo del Prado 5. www.armada.mde.es/museonaval. ✆ **91-523-87-89.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 10am–2pm. Metro: Atocha or Banco de España.

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza ★★ ART MUSEUM The Thyssen is a curious assemblage of wonderful art through the ages, all from one of the great private collections of the 20th century. After great intrigue, Spain bought it from the wealthy Thyssen-Bornemisza family of Holland, Germany, and Hungary in 1985. To house the collection, the Spanish government renovated an 18th-century building adjacent to the Prado.

Rooms are arranged numerically so that by following the order of the rooms (nos. 1–48, spread out over three floors), a logical sequence of European painting can be traced from the 13th to the 20th centuries. The nucleus of the collection consists of 700 world-class paintings. They include works by, among others, El Greco, Velázquez, Dürer, Rembrandt, Watteau, Canaletto, Caravaggio, Hals, Memling, and Goya.

Unusual among the world's great art collections because of its eclecticism, the Thyssen group also contains 19th- and 20th-century paintings by many of the notable French Impressionists. It houses as well works by Picasso, Sargent, Kirchner, Nolde, and Kandinsky—artists who had never been well represented in Spanish museums. In addition to European paintings, major American works can be viewed here, including paintings by Thomas Cole, Winslow Homer, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Edward Hopper, Robert Rauschenberg, Stuart Davis, and

The Real Jardín Botánico.

Roy Lichtenstein. Many of these belonged to the private collection of the Baroness Thyssen-Bornemisza, and are housed in the 2004 expansion to the museum. Plan to spend about 2 hours here.

Palacio de Villahermosa, Paseo del Prado 8. www.museothyssen.org. ✆ **91-369-01-51.** Admission 8€ adults, 5.50€ students and seniors, free for children 11 and under. Tues–Sun 10am–7pm. Metro: Banco de España. Bus: 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 14, 15, 20, 27, 34, 45, 51, 52, 53, 74, 146, or 150.

Real Jardín Botánico (Royal Botanical Garden) PARK/GARDEN Across Calle de Alfonso XII, at the southwest corner of Parque del Retiro, lie these charming gardens. Founded in the 18th century, the gardens contain more than 104 species of trees and 3,000 types of plants. Also on the premises are an exhibition hall and a library specializing in botany.

2 Plaza de Murillo. www.rjb.csic.es. ✆ **91-420-30-17.** Admission 2.50€ adults, 1.25€ students. Summer daily 10am–9pm; winter daily 10am–6pm. Closed Christmas and New Year's Day. Metro: Atocha. Bus: 10, 14, 19, 26, 27, 32, 34, 37, 45, 57, 146, or 150.

Outlying Attractions

Casa de Campo PARK/GARDEN These former royal hunting grounds cover miles of parkland lying south of the Palacio Royal across the Manzanares River. You can see the gate through which the kings rode out of the palace grounds, either on horseback or in carriages, on their way to the tree-lined park. A lake contained within Casa de Campo is usually filled with rowers. You can have drinks and light refreshments by the water or go swimming in a city-run pool. Children will love both the zoo and the Parque de Atracciones (see "Especially for Kids," p. 95).

Daily 8am–9pm. Metro: Lago or Batán.

Panteón de Goya (Goya's Tomb) ★ 🎁 CHURCH In a remote part of town, beyond the Norte train station, lies Goya's tomb, containing one of the painter's masterpieces: an elaborately beautiful fresco depicting the miracles of St. Anthony on the dome and cupola of the little hermitage of San Antonio de la Florida. This has been called Goya's Sistine Chapel. Already deaf when he began the painting, Goya labored dawn to dusk for 16 weeks, painting with sponges rather than with brushes. By depicting common street life—stonemasons, prostitutes, and beggars—Goya raised the ire of the nobility, who withheld judgment until the patron, Carlos IV, viewed the painting. When the monarch approved, the "outrageous" painting was deemed acceptable.

The tomb and fresco are in one of the twin chapels (visit the one on the right) that were built in the latter part of the 18th century. Discreetly placed mirrors will help you see the ceiling better.

Glorieta de San Antonio de la Florida 5. ☎ **91-542-07-22.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 9:30am–8pm; Sat–Sun 10am–2pm. Metro: Príncipe Pío. Bus: 41, 46, 75, or C.

Plaza Monumental de Toros de las Ventas SPORTS VENUE Madrid draws the finest matadors in Spain—if a matador hasn't proven his worth in the Plaza Monumental de Toros de las Ventas bullring, he hasn't been recognized as a top-flight artist. The major season begins during the Fiestas de San Isidro, patron saint of Madrid, on May 15. This is the occasion for a series of fights with talent scouts in the audience. Matadors who distinguish themselves in the ring are signed up for Mallorca, Málaga, and other places.

Even if you have no desire to attend a bullfight, you will learn a lot about the role of the *corrida* in Spanish history and culture by taking a **Tauro Tour** of Las Ventas. They are offered Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 1:30pm; the cost is 7€ for adults, 5€ for children. You can purchase tickets at the stadium's box office (Fri–Sun 10am–2pm and 5–8pm), which is also the best place to buy bullfight tickets.

Bullfighting at the Plaza Monumental de Toros de las Ventas.

You can also get bullfight tickets from one of Madrid's most competent ticket agents, **Localidades Galicia,** Plaza del Carmen 1 (www.bullfightticketsmadrid.com; ✆ **91-531-91-31;** Metro: Sol). It's open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 1pm. Regardless of where you buy them, tickets to bullfights range from 5€ to 134€, depending on the event and the position of your seat within the stadium. Concierges for virtually every reputable upper-bracket hotel in Madrid can acquire tickets, through inner channels of their own, to bullfights and other sought-after entertainment. Front-row seats at the bullfights are known as *barreras. Delanteras* (third-row seats) are available in both the *alta* (high) and the *baja* (low) sections. The cheapest seats, *filas,* afford the worst views and are in the *sol* (sun) during the entire performance. The best seats are in the *sombra* (shade). Bullfights are held on Sundays and holidays throughout most of the year, and every day during certain festivals, which tend to last around 3 weeks, usually in late spring. Starting times are adjusted according to the anticipated hour of sundown on performance day, usually 7pm from March to October and 5pm during late autumn and early spring. Late-night fights by neophyte matadors are sometimes staged under spotlights on Saturday around 11pm.

Alcalá 237. www.las-ventas.com. ✆ **91-356-22-00.** Metro: Ventas.

Real Fábrica de Tapices ★ 🎁 FACTORY TOUR The first Bourbon king, Felipe V, founded the Royal Tapestry Factory in 1721 to emulate the Gobelins Manufactory in Paris launched by his cousin, the French king Louis XIV. Francisco de Goya worked here in the mid–18th century designing cartoons for the tapestries in a Palacio Royal, and a few of his drawings are on display. Weavers still work at the original wooden hand looms, making rugs and wall tapestries and restoring historic pieces.

Fuenterrabia 2. www.realfabricadetapices.com. ✆ **91-434-05-50.** Admission 4€ adults, 3€ children. Guided tours Mon–Fri 10am–2pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Atocha.

Organized Tours

The city of Madrid offers a series of walking (and even a few bicycle!) tours with professional multilingual guides. Most tours cost less than 5€ and depart from the **Discover Madrid** headquarters at the Plaza Mayor Tourist Center, Plaza Mayor 27. The office can also give information about hiring a private tour guide.

A large number of commercial agencies in Madrid book organized tours and excursions to sights and attractions both within and outside the city limits. Although it won't exactly be spontaneous, some visitors appreciate the convenience and efficiency of being able to visit so many sights in a single well-organized day.

Many of the city's hotel concierges and all of the city's travel agents will book anyone who asks for a guided tour of Madrid or its environs with one of Spain's largest tour operators, **Pullmantur,** Plaza de Oriente 8 (www.pullmantur.es; ✆ **90-208-55-12**). Regardless of destination and trip duration, virtually every tour departs from the Pullmantur terminal at that address.

The Madrid Sightseeing Tour starts at 20€ for 1 day of unlimited reboarding, or 24€ for 2 days. The double-decker buses make continuous 80-minute circuits of the central city, letting you set your own pace and itinerary. A cursory running commentary in Spanish and English accompanies the route. The Madrid

Panoramic Tour (22€) is more extensive, taking 2½ hours and operating at 9:30am and 3pm. Narration is available in Spanish or English, with French and Italian added on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Sundays.

Toledo is the most popular full-day excursion outside the city limits. Trips cost 77€. These tours (including a full lunch) depart daily at 9:45am, last all day, and include ample opportunities for wandering at will through Toledo's narrow streets. (You can save 19€ by opting out of lunch.) You can also take an abbreviated half-day tour of Toledo, without stopping for lunch, for 43€. Tour times are at 8:45am and 3pm.

Another popular tour visits the monastery at **El Escorial** (p. 166). It departs at 8:45am and gets back shortly before 2pm. Guided narration is in Spanish and English, with Italian as an option on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. It costs 55€.

The third major Pullmantur bus tour from Madrid's center races through two of the nearest important cities of Castilla y León in a full-day guided excursion to Ávila and Segovia. It includes a heady dose of Counter-Reformation church history as well as extensive medieval and ancient Roman monuments. The price per person without lunch is 64€. Lunch adds another 24€.

Especially for Kids

Museo de Cera de Madrid (Wax Museum) ☺ MUSEUM The kids will enjoy seeing a lifelike wax Columbus calling on Fernando and Isabel, as well as Marlene Dietrich checking out Bill and Hillary Clinton. The 450 wax figures include heroes and villains of World War II. Two galleries display Romans and Arabs from the ancient days of the Iberian Peninsula; a show gives a 30-minute recap of Spanish history from the Phoenicians to the present.

Paseo de Recoletos 41. www.museoceramadrid.com. ✆ **91-319-26-49.** Admission 16€ adults and children 11 and over, 12€ children 4–10 and seniors, free for children 3 and under. Mon–Fri 10am–2:30pm and 4:30–8:30pm; Sat–Sun 10am–8:30pm. Metro: Colón. Bus: 5, 27, 45, 53, or 150.

Parque de Atracciones ☺ AMUSEMENT PARK This amusement park was created in 1969 to entertain the young at heart with an array of rides and concessions. Here you'll find a toboggan slide, a carousel, pony rides, an adventure into outer space, a walk through a transparent maze, a visit to Jungle Land, a motor-propelled series of cars disguised as tail-wagging dachshund puppies, and a gyrating whirligig clutched in the tentacles of El Pulpo (the Octopus). The most popular rides are a pair of roller coasters named 7 Picos and Jet Star. The park has many diversions for adults, too (see El Teatro Auditorio del Parque de Atracciones under "Entertainment & Nightlife," p. 123).

Casa de Campo. www.parquedeatracciones.es. ✆ **91-463-29-00.** Admission 30€ adults, 23€ children 3–6, free for children 2 and under. Apr–May Tues–Fri noon–8pm, Sat–Sun noon–10pm; variable hours the rest of the year. Take the suburban train from Plaza de España and stop near the entrance to the park (Entrada de Batán). Bus: 33 or 65.

Zoo Aquarium de Madrid ☺ ZOO This modern, well-organized facility allows you to see wildlife from five continents, with about 3,000 animals on display. Most are in simulated natural habitats, with moats separating them from the public. There's a petting zoo for the kids and a show presented by the Chu-Lin band. The zoo/aquarium complex includes a 520,000-gallon tropical marine aquarium, a dolphin aquarium, and an array of colorful parrots.

A lionfish at the Zoo Aquarium de Madrid.

Casa de Campo. www.zoomadrid.com. ☎ **90-234-50-14.** Admission 20€ adults and children 8 and over, 16€ seniors and children 3–7, free for children 2 and under. Mon–Fri 11am–6pm; Sat, Sun, and holidays 10:30am–6pm. Metro: Casa de Campo. Bus: 33.

WHERE TO EAT

Virtually every regional Spanish cuisine and culinary trend is represented in Madrid's vibrant dining scene. Prices at the fancy tourist restaurants reach the same heights as New York, London, or Paris, but the city also has many affordable taverns and family restaurants.

Many of Spain's greatest chefs have opened restaurants in Madrid, energizing the city's culinary scene. Gone are the days when mainly Madrileño food was featured, which meant Castilian specialties such as *cocido* (a stew of mixed meats, sausages, and offal) or roast suckling pig or lamb. Now you can take a culinary tour of the country while remaining in Madrid—from Andalucía with its gazpacho and braised bull's tails, to Asturias with its *fabada* (rich pork stew) and *sidra* (cider), to the Basque Country with Spain's most sophisticated cuisine. There is also a host of Galician and Mediterranean restaurants in Madrid. Although Madrid is landlocked, Madrileños prize their fish and you can get some of the freshest seafood in the country here.

One way to save money is to order the ***menú del día*** **(menu of the day)** or ***cubierto*** **(fixed price).** Both are fixed-price menus based either on market deals, or whatever is surplus in the kitchen. These dining bargains don't always match the quality of more expensive a la carte choices. Each usually includes a first course (usually a soup or salad) followed by a main dish, bread, dessert, and the house wine. The ***menú turístico*** is a similar fixed-price menu, but generally provides more food than most travelers want.

Service may seem perfunctory by U.S. standards. Matter-of-fact waiters do not return to the table to ask how things are. It's a stylistic difference, and if you observe closely, you'll see that Spanish waiters typically handle more tables than

American waiters and that they work quickly and efficiently. Follow the local custom and don't overtip. Theoretically, service is included in the price of the meal, but it's customary to leave an additional 10%.

Puerta del Sol & Las Letras

VERY EXPENSIVE

La Terraza del Casino ★★★ SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL   Ferrán Adrià, the innovative master of cuisine, created all the dishes on the menu here and flies in regularly to see that his cooks are following his orders. His restaurant in Madrid occupies the top floor of the Casino, a historic building and a former gentlemen's club with a history going back to 1910. But the grand dons of those days didn't dine as well as you can today.

The exquisite food prepared with fresh seasonal ingredients reinterprets traditional Spanish dishes. An example is *raya* (skate) in oil and saffron with parsley purée and nuts on a bed of finely diced fries. More traditional dishes are the succulent *merluza a la gallega* (Galician hake) and the *crema de la fabada asturiana* (creamed Asturian bean soup) served with *menestra* (mixed vegetables) al dente.

This dining hot spot provides a panoramic view of the heart of Madrid and can be reached by an elevator or by a sweeping 19th-century staircase. The decor is classically restrained, with high ceilings and crystal chandeliers.

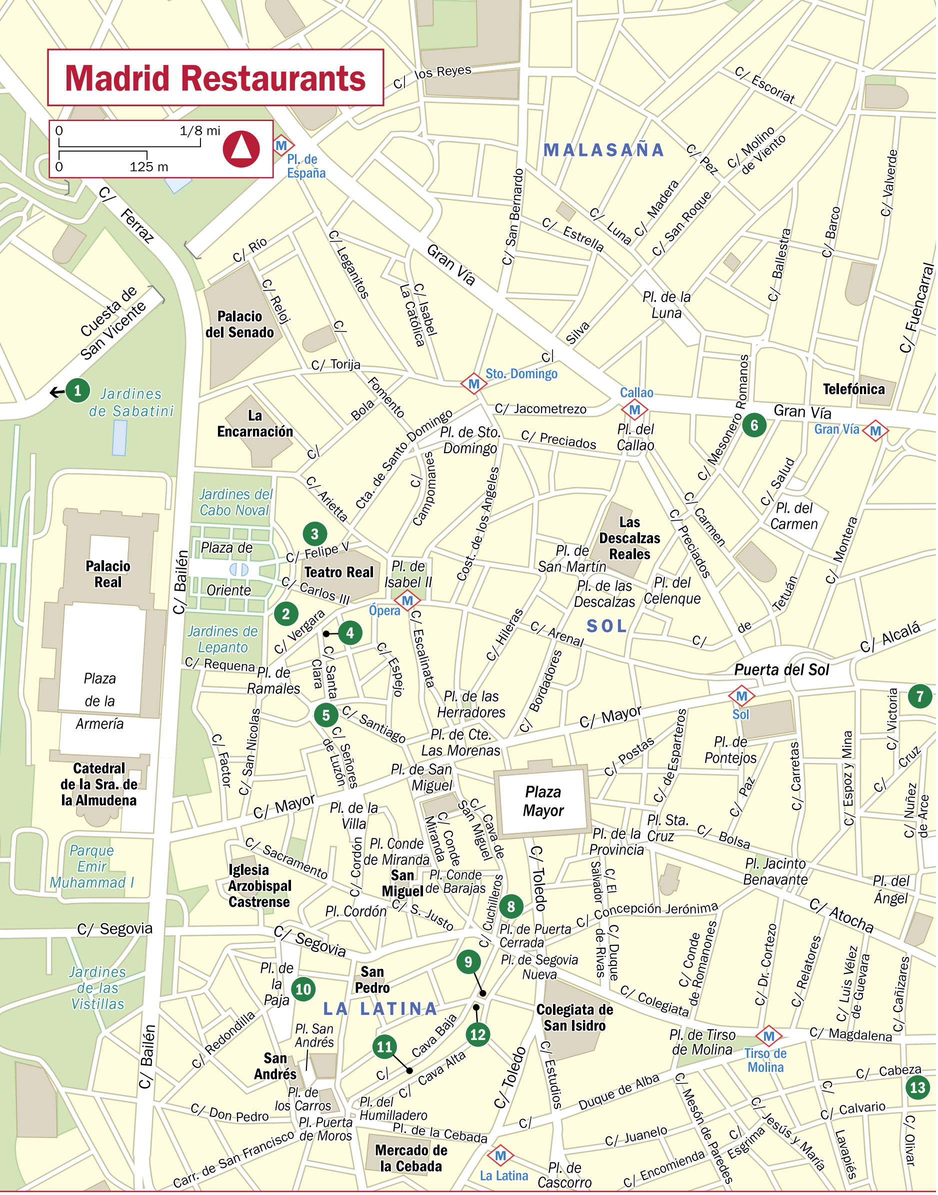
Alcalá 15. www.casinodemadrid.es. ☎ **91-532-12-75.** Main courses 30€–40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–4pm; Mon–Sat 9–11:45pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Sevilla or Puerta del Sol.

Restaurante Europa Deco ★★ MEDITERRANEAN   Tucked away in the Urban, one of the chicest hotels in Spain (p. 134), this elegant enclave of good food attracts celebrities, politicians, and even soccer stars. The setting is stunning, with Papuan totems, golden Venetian mosaic columns, and black Brazilian granite floors. The *pijos* (the smart set) show up here in hordes, and even serious foodies are drawn to the smashing champagne cocktails and some of Madrid's best sushi. Joaquin de Felipe is rightly hailed as one of the city's most accomplished chefs. Perhaps you'll agree after sampling such specials as his "New Wave" gazpacho, made with fava beans and Kamone-tomato purée, or the deboned pork or sautéed scallops. His skirt steak of Iberian pig is reason enough to come back. End with one of his daily changing but always sumptuous desserts.

In the Urban Hotel, Carrera de San Jerónim 34. ☎ **91-787-77-80.** Reservations required. Main courses 37€–40€; *menú degustación* 65€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–3:30pm and 8pm–midnight; Sat 8pm–midnight. Metro: Sevilla.

EXPENSIVE

Errota-Zar BASQUE   The Basque Country has long been known as the gastronomic capital of Spain, and Errota-Zar provides a fine showcase for its cuisine. The name means "old mill," a nostalgic reference to the original home of the Basque owners. A small bar at the entrance displays a collection of fine cigars and wines, and the blue-painted walls are adorned with paintings of Basque landscapes. The restaurant has only about two dozen tables, which can easily fill up. Many Basques begin their meal with a *tortilla de bacalao* (salt cod omelet). For main dishes, sample the delights of *chuletón de buey* (oxtail with grilled vegetables) or *kokotxas de merluza en aceite* (cheeks of hake cooked in virgin olive oil).



Madrid Restaurants

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C/ Pez
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C/ Valverde
C/ Ferraz
C/ Río
C/ Leganitos
Gran Vía
C/ San Bernardo
C/ Estrella
C/ Luna
C/ Madera
C/ San Roque
C/ Barco
C/ Ballestra
C/ Fuencarral
Cuesta de San Vicente
Palacio del Senado
C/ Reloj
C/ Isabel La Católica
Silva
Pl. de la Luna
C/ Torija
Fomento
Sto. Domingo
Callao
Telefónica
Gran Vía
Jardines de Sabatini
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La Encarnación
C/ Jacometrezo
Cta. de Santo Domingo
Pl. de Sto. Domingo
C/ Preciados
Pl. del Callao
C/ Mesonero Romanos
6
C/ Salud
Pl. del Carmen
Jardines del Cabo Noval
C/ Arrieta
C/ Campomanes
Cost. de los Ángeles
Las Descalzas Reales
C/ Carmen
C/ Preciados
C/ Montera
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Plaza de Oriente
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Pl. de San Martín
Pl. de las Descalzas
Pl. del Celenque
Tetuán
Palacio Real
C/ Bailén
C/ Carlos III
Ópera
2
C/ Vergara
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Jardines de Lepanto
C/ Requena
C/ Escalinata
C/ Hileras
C/ Arenal
SOL
C/ Alcalá
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C/ Santa Clara
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Sol
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Pl. de Pontejos
C/ Victoria
Catedral de la Sra. de la Almudena
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Plaza Mayor
C/ Postas
C/ de Esparteros
C/ Carretas
C/ Espoz y Mina
Cruz
C/ Mayor
Pl. de la Villa
C/ Paz
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Pl. Sta. Cruz
C/ Bolsa
Pl. de la Provincia
C/ Cava de San Miguel
C/ Conde Miranda
Parque Emir Muhammad I
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Pl. Conde de Miranda
C/ Cordón
Iglesia Arzobispal Castrense
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Pl. de los Carros
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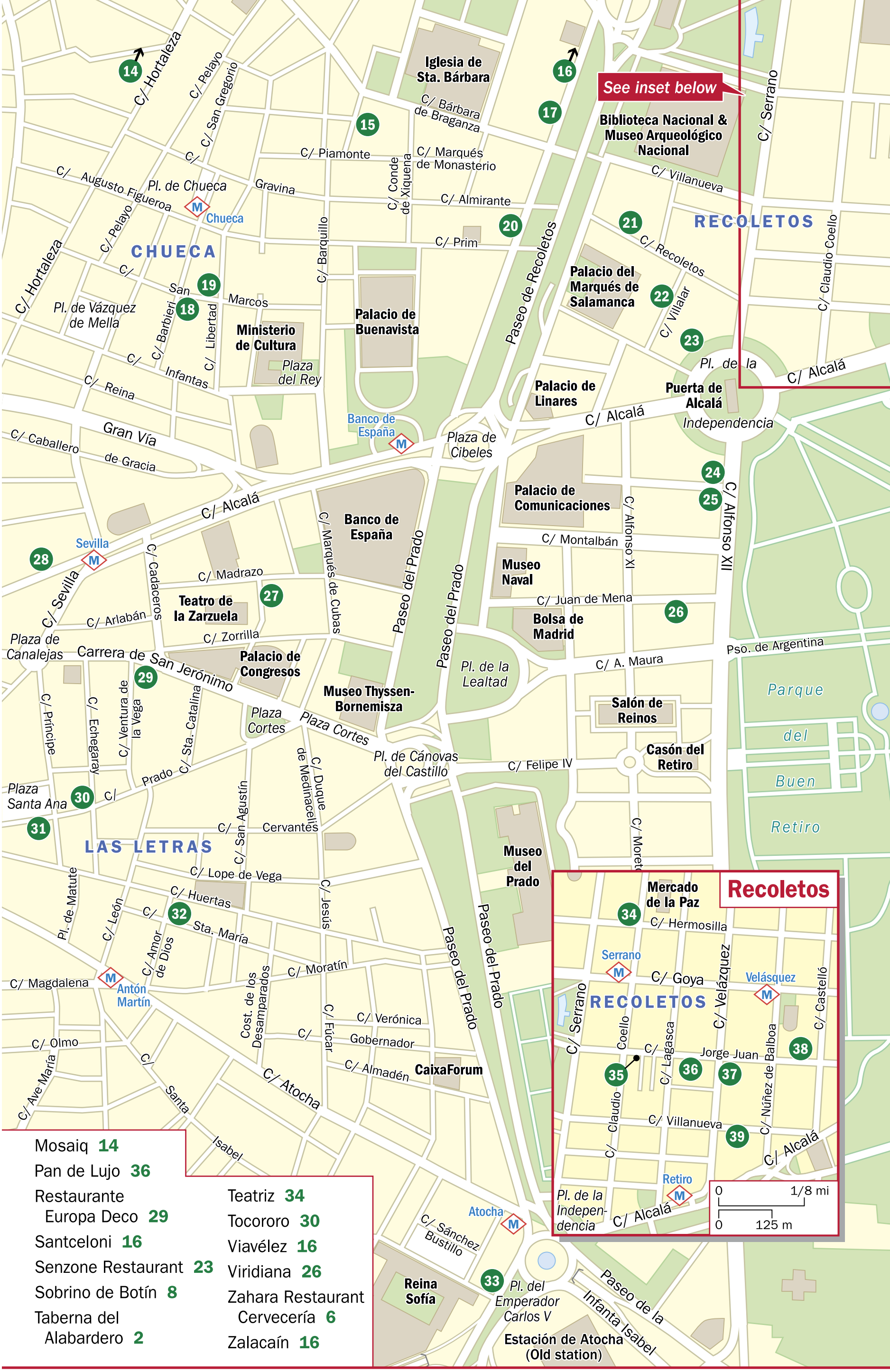
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C/ San Gregorio
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C/ Prim
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C/ San Marcos
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C/ A. Maura
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C/ Felipe IV
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Carrera de San Jerónimo
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Hake cheeks may not sound appetizing, but Spaniards and many foreigners praise this fish dish. You might opt for *foie al Pedro Jiménez* (duck liver grilled and served with a sweet wine sauce). The best homemade desserts are *cuajada de la casa,* a thick yogurt made from sheep's milk; and *tarta de limón,* a lemon cake. You might also try rice ice cream in prune sauce.

Jovellanos 3, 1st floor. www.errota-zar.com. ✆ **91-531-25-64.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug 15–30 and Easter. Metro: Banco España or Sevilla.

Lhardy ★ SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL This is Madrid's longest-running culinary act. Lhardy has been a Madrileño legend since opening in 1839 as a gathering place for the city's literati and political leaders. Within a dignified antique setting of marble and hardwood, steaming consommé is dispensed from silver samovars into delicate porcelain cups, and rows of croquettes, tapas, and sandwiches are served to stand-up clients who pay for their food at a cashier's kiosk near the entrance. The ground-floor deli and takeout service is open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 3pm and 5 to 9:30pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

The real culinary skill of the place, however, is on Lhardy's second floor, where you'll find a formal restaurant decorated in the ornate Belle Epoque style of Isabel II. Specialties of the house include monkfish in lobster sauce; baked Cantabrian sea bass with fennel; partridge stew with French onions; and duck breast in a green-pepper sauce.

Carrera de San Jerónimo 8. www.lhardy.com. ✆ **91-521-33-85.** Reservations recommended in the upstairs dining room. Main dishes 28€–39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon 1–3:30pm; Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Sol.

MODERATE

Tocororo 🎁 CUBAN This is Madrid's finest Cuban restaurant. The nostalgia is evident in the pictures of Old Havana. The waitstaff is as lively as the pop Cuban music playing on the stereo. Expect typical Caribbean dishes, such as *ropa vieja* (shredded meat served with black beans and rice) and lobster enchiladas. If you prefer a simpler repast, try a selection of *empanadas y tamales* (fried potato pastries and plantain dough filled with onions and ground meat). Special house cocktails include mojitos (rum, mint, and a hint of sugar) and daiquiris. Winter brings live Cuban music.

Calle del Prado 3 (at the corner of Echegaray). www.el-tocororo.com. ✆ **91-369-40-00.** Reservations required Thurs–Sat. Main courses 15€–22€; *menú del día* 10€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed last 2 weeks Feb and last 2 weeks Sept. Metro: Sevilla.

INEXPENSIVE

Casa Lastra ASTURIAN Some visitors come here because they've heard this establishment serves "Austrian cuisine." Actually, the food is inspired by the cuisine of Asturias, a province of Spain in the northwest. Since 1926, this tavern has attracted a devoted following, particularly among homesick Asturians. The decoration is regional, with cowbells, dried sausages, "pigtails" of garlic, and wood clogs. The restaurant and cider house (cider is the national drink of the province) is known for serving very big portions, which means you might want to skip the starters. However, if you do indulge, we recommend *fabes con almejas* (white beans with clams) and *chorizo a la sidra* (spicy Spanish sausage cooked in cider). As a main course, *merluza* (hake) is also cooked in cider. If you're here in winter, order a fabulous *fabada*—the meat, sausage, and bean casserole of the province. Goat meat is yet another specialty, as is a cheese made from a blend of milk from goats, sheep, and cows. For dessert, locals order *carbayón,* made from sweetened egg yolks and almonds. Everything is washed down with cider, which might be more potent than you think.

Olivar 3. www.casalastra.com. ☎ **91-369-14-82,** or 91-369-08-37 for reservations. Reservations required. Main courses 10€–18€; fixed-price menu 12€. AE, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–4pm; Thurs–Sat and Mon–Tues 8pm–midnight. Closed July. Metro: Antón Martín, Tirso de Molina.

El Brillante 🏷 SPANISH Practically in the shadow of the Reina Sofía, El Brillante offers some of the best cheap eats in the entire city. The place is so large that one door faces the Atocha rail station and another faces the Reina Sofía. Knowledgeable Madrileños flock here for great sandwiches on fresh rolls. The specialty of the house is the fried calamari sandwich, but choices range from sliced pork with cheese or peppers to anchovies with tomatoes or the vegetarian asparagus, lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise. *Mini-bocadillos* are 2.50€ to 2.75€; 10-inch *super bocatas* are 4€ to 5.60€. Whatever you order, you'll probably have to eat it standing at one of the stainless steel bars, as chairs at the tables are hard to find.

Atocha 122. ☎ **91-468-05-48.** Sandwiches 3€–7€. Daily 6:30am–midnight or later. No credit cards. Metro: Atocha.

La Biotika 🎁 VEGETARIAN Vegetarianism is anathema in Spanish cuisine, but this spot gives vegans and vegetarians a place to get their fix of seitan and tofu. On the east side of Plaza Santa Ana, it is intimate and charming. The best starters are the homemade soups, which are made fresh daily, or the large, crisp salads. The bread is also made fresh every day. A specialty is the "meatball without meat"—made with vegetables and rolled into a sphere. Sautéed tofu with zucchini or other veggies is always available.

Amor de Dios 3. www.labiotika.es. ☎ **91-429-07-80.** *Menú del día* 11€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–11:30pm; Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Antón Martín.

Plaza Mayor & La Latina

EXPENSIVE

El Schotis ★ SPANISH If you've come to Madrid because it is one of the hubs of international culinary creativity, you're in the wrong place. But even the most adventurous eater would do well to sample the traditional dishes that serve as a springboard for the *nueva cocina.* Specialties of the house include roast baby lamb, grilled steaks and veal chops, shrimp with garlic, and fried hake in green sauce. El Schotis was established in 1962 on one of Madrid's oldest and most historic streets. A series of large and pleasingly old-fashioned dining rooms is the setting for an animated crowd of Madrileños and foreign visitors. There's a bar near the entrance for tapas and before- or after-dinner drinks.

Cava Baja 11. ☎ **91-365-32-30.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Closed Aug 15–Sept 7. Metro: Sol or La Latina.

MODERATE

Casa Lucio ★ CASTILIAN Set on a historic street whose edges once marked the perimeter of Old Madrid, this venerable *tasca* with all the requisite antique accessories actually opened in 1974. Dozens of cured hams hang from hand-hewn beams above the well-oiled bar. Some surprisingly well-known public figures (even the king, on occasion) favor Casa Lucio for its classics of the Castilian grill. The two dining rooms, each on a different floor, have whitewashed walls, tile floors, and exposed brick. A well-trained staff knows its way around the retro menu, which includes Jabugo ham with broad beans, shrimp in garlic sauce, hake with green sauce, several types of roasted lamb, and a thick steak served sizzling hot on a heated platter (called *churrasco de la casa*).

Cava Baja 35. www.casalucio.es. ✆ **91-365-32-52.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Fri 1–4pm and 9–11:30pm; Sat 9–11:30pm. Closed Aug. Metro: La Latina.

La Posada de la Villa SPANISH This historic inn, constructed in 1642, offers a modern, sanitized version of the earthy, grilled cuisine that fed the original stonemasons. Rebuilt in the 1980s, its three dining rooms evoke a bygone age with their fitted stones and textured plaster. The menu here focuses on the time-honored specialty of roasted baby lamb, which patrons order more than anything else on the menu. Other excellent choices include different versions of hake, Madrid-style tripe, and the rich, savory stew (*cocida madrileña*) that many local residents remember fondly from childhood days. Notice that many of the chairs have brass plaques bearing the names of famous patrons.

Cava Baja 9. www.posadadelavilla.com. ✆ **91-366-18-60.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–28€. DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Closed Aug. Metro: La Latina, Tirso de Molina, or Sol.

Sobrino de Botín ★ SPANISH Ernest Hemingway made this restaurant famous: In the final pages of his novel *The Sun Also Rises,* Jake invites Brett to Botín for the Segovian specialty of roast suckling pig, washed down with Rioja Alta. The menu is still the same.

As you enter, you step back to 1725, the year the restaurant was founded. You'll see an open kitchen with a charcoal hearth, hanging copper pots, an 18th-century tile oven for roasting the suckling pig, and a big pot of soup whose aroma wafts across the tables. The two house specialties are roast suckling pig and roast Segovian lamb, and they are the main reason to dine here. If some in your party demur, you might try the fish-based "quarter-of-an-hour" soup, the baked Cantabrian hake, or the grilled filet mignon with potatoes. The dessert list features strawberries (in season) with whipped cream. You can accompany your meal with Valdepeñas or Aragón wine, although most guests order sangria.

Calle de Cuchilleros 17. www.botin.es. ✆ **91-366-42-17.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–29€; fixed-price menu 42€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Metro: La Latina, Ópera, Sol, or Tirso de Molina.

INEXPENSIVE

El Cosaco 🏷 RUSSIAN One of the few Russian restaurants in Madrid sits adjacent to one of the most charming and evocative squares in town. Inside, you'll find dining rooms outfitted with paintings and artifacts from the former Soviet Union. Menu items seem to taste best when preceded with something from a long list of vodkas, many from small-scale distilleries you might not immediately recognize. Items include rich and savory cold-weather dishes that seem a bit at odds with the sweltering heat of Madrid, but they can be satisfying alternatives to the all-Spanish restaurants in the same neighborhood. Examples include beef stroganoff; quenelles of pike or perch with fresh dill; and thin-sliced smoked salmon or sturgeon artfully arranged with capers, chopped onions, and chopped hard-boiled eggs. The red or the white version of borscht makes a worthy starter. Blinis, stuffed with caviar or paprika-laced beef, are always excellent.

Plaza de la Paja 2. www.restauranteelcosaco.com. ☎ **91-365-35-48.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–18€; menú del día 13€. MC, V. Daily 9pm–midnight. Metro: La Latina.

Ópera & Palacio Real

Café de Oriente SPANISH/FRENCH With its view of the Palacio Real, Plaza de Oriente is probably the swankest spot in Madrid for outdoor dining, and the Café de Oriente is the fanciest place on the plaza. The complex has two upscale indoor restaurants serving elegant if fussy food, but the prices are as haute as the cuisine. On the other hand, the outdoor cafe is elegant in its own way and far more affordable. Sandwiches are dainty and little tarts (like chicken with asparagus) are light but delectable. It's also a great spot for the ice-cream treat known as a copa princessa: scoops of vanilla and peach ice cream drenched in peach sauce.

Plaza de Oriente 2. ☎ **91-541-39-74.** Cafe plates 6€–18€; dining room main dishes from 35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Cafe daily 10am–1am; dining rooms daily 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Ópera.

Casa Marta 🏷 SPANISH A big smile goes a long way at this mom-and-pop restaurant on a side street off Vergara. Honored by the city for its contributions to Madrid dining, Casa Marta serves real home cooking with old-fashioned favorites like roasted stuffed green peppers or a casserole of veal-and-almond meatballs. Don't miss the house croquettes (6€). They are the perfect balance of béchamel and tuna with just a hint of onion, lightly fried so they explode with flavor on the first bite.

Santa Clara 10. www.restaurantecasamarta.com. ☎ **91-548-28-25.** Main courses 8€–14€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sun 1:30–4pm. Metro: Ópera.

La Gastroteca de Santiago ★ 🎁 SPANISH This small space, with room for only 18 foodies, is one of the special favorites of in-the-know Madrileños, who guard its address somewhat zealously. It's typical of trendy restaurants rising through Madrid offering haute cuisine at good-value prices. La Gastroteca is a showcase for the culinary wares of its most talented chef, Juan Carlos Ramos. The menu is authentic and regional and changes frequently based on the best market conditions every week. Here you dine on well-prepared, robust fare, including terrine of pig tail, blood sausage, garlic-laden snails, and lobster or confit of goat with broad beans and mint. On Sunday, special meat-and-rice dishes are served. The wine *carte* has more than 400 vintages and is strong on burgundies. If you order the pricy sampler menu, you can enjoy a meal fit for royalty.

Plaza Santiago 1. www.lagastrotecadesantiago.es. ☎ **91-548-07-07.** Reservations required. Main courses 26€–31€; sampler menu 60€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sun 1:30–4pm. Metro: Ópera.

Taberna del Alabardero ★ BASQUE/SPANISH Handy to the Palacio Royal, this Spanish classic serves some of Madrid's top creative tapas as well as some of the more luxe traditional snacks, including squid in red wine. Photographs of once-famous patrons line the walls. The restaurant in the rear, which also has a dining room in the cellar, was a pioneer of contemporary Basque

Hot Cups

Whether you're coming from a night at the bars or even at the disco next door, you'll meet all of Madrid at **Chocolatería San Ginés,** Pasadizo San Ginés 5 (✆ **91-365-65-46;** daily 9am–6am; cash only; Metro: Sol or Ópera), where chocolate has been a ceremony as much as a drink since 1894. From the door you'll see cups lined up on the marble bar with all the handles facing the same way and a spoon on each saucer. Order a cup of the very thick, slightly bitter hot chocolate with a plate of *churros* (fried sticks of dough)—slightly more expensive at night—and proceed to dust your hot *churros* with sugar. Dip and enjoy. There's no better preparation for going to bed. Of course, you can always come back for breakfast, as the shop barely closes long enough to sweep the floor.

cooking in Madrid. The decor resembles a typical *taberna* in Basque Country, but the cooking is market-based contemporary cuisine.

Felipe V, no. 6. www.grupolezama.es. ✆ **91-547-25-77.** Reservations required for restaurant only. Bar: tapas 3€–12€; glass of house wine 4€. Restaurant: main courses 17€–25€; *menú del día* 16€; gourmet menu 46€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Ópera.

Chueca

Asiana ★★ 🎁 FRENCH/ASIAN This is one of Madrid's most romantic and perhaps excessive dining experiences. Jaime Renedo had to persuade his mother to allow him to open this hidden-away restaurant inside her store devoted to Asian antiques in the increasingly gentrified Chueca district. After ringing the bell, you'll be shown to one of seven candlelit tables in a cellar space filled with gilt Buddhas and Ming vases. Walk-ins are not accepted, and a major credit card is needed to reserve a table at what is the most private public restaurant in town.

Renedo and his Japanese partner dream up a 16-course menu that changes monthly, combining Asian aesthetic with French culinary technique. Two of the best dishes are ravioli stuffed with fish and potato mousse, and melon gazpacho with lobster. Fresh and tender squid is shipped in from Galicia and mated with porcini petals and a macadamia oil aioli.

Travesia de San Mateo 4. www.asianadeco.com. ✆ **91-310-09-65.** Reservations required. Tasting menu 105€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10:30am–2:30pm and 5–8:30pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Alonso Martínez.

Bazaar Restaurant 🏷 SPANISH What a shock! Madrileños lining up at 8pm waiting for a restaurant to open! Not only has this trendy spot lured early diners, but the kitchen is so fast that the restaurant turns the tables at least twice every night. The big attraction is contemporary light food with good flavor for a good value. The menu is just a list of dishes, so it's up to you to mix and match to make a meal. Salads are usually big enough to split, while main dishes like whole roasted dorado or the chicken with sun-dried tomatoes, pine nuts, and fettuccine are modest portions. Wine is sold only by the bottle, so if you're on a budget, order beer.

Libertad 21. www.restaurantbazaar.com. ✆ **91-523-39-05.** Main dishes 7€–13€. AE, MC, V. Daily 1:15–4pm and 8:30–11:45pm. Metro: Chueca.

Casa Salvador SPANISH/ANDALUCÍAN This is a robust, macho enclave of Madrid. The owner of this bustling restaurant configured it as a minimuseum to his hobby and passion, the Spanish art of bullfighting. Inside, near a bar that stocks an impressive collection of sherries and whiskeys, you'll find the memorabilia of years of bull-watching, including photographs of great matadors beginning in the 1920s, and agrarian artifacts used in the raising and development of fighting bulls. The menu is as robust as the decor, featuring macho-size platters of oxtail in red-wine sauce; different preparations of hake (one of which is baked delectably in a salt crust); stuffed pepper, fried calamari, and shrimp entrees; and, for dessert, the local version of *arroz con leche*.

Calle Barbieri 12. ✆ **91-521-45-24.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed 2 weeks July–Aug. Metro: Chueca.

Salamanca, Retiro & Chamberí

VERY EXPENSIVE

La Manduca de Azagra ★★ SPANISH/NAVARRESE A table here at night is one of the most sought-after in Madrid. Fashionistas show up, blending in with French sophisticates, bourgeois Madrileños, and young gay professionals. Fortunately, the cuisine lives up to the hype, playing games with the traditions of a steakhouse by emphasizing outstanding raw dishes (crudos and tartares, mostly) with just enough modern cooked plates to justify calling itself a brasserie. Some great versions of the classics are available, such as fried asparagus and fresh artichokes. To get an idea of the kitchen's artistry, try the smoked layered potatoes and foie gras. The menu emphasizes the fresh market, and service is polite and efficient. Wine choices reflect some of the rising districts, with superb whites from Galicia and daunting Navarra reds.

Sagasta 14. www.lamanducadeazagra.com. ✆ **91-591-01-12.** Reservations required. Main courses 32€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Metro: Alonso Martínez.

Santceloni ★★★ MEDITERRANEAN Created as the capital city outpost for brilliant Catalán chef Santi Santamaría, Santceloni expresses Santamaría's almost religious approach to quality ingredients. Chef Óscar Velasco was Santamaría's right-hand man and chief disciple, but he has emerged very much as his own man at Santceloni. The dishes are still based on the freshest ingredients available that day in the marketplace, and the preparations highlight the flavors of the main ingredients rather than the sauces of classical cuisine. The painstaking care that goes into the selection of ingredients shines forth on the plate in a light cuisine of explosive flavor intensity. You can sample such starters as a terrine of tuna and foie gras. For main courses, you'll find well-prepared specialties including loin of roast suckling pig with fresh thyme; shoulder of lamb with candied shallots; and loin of hake with black truffles.

In the Hotel Hesperia, Paseo de la Castellana 57. www.restaurantesantceloni.com. ✆ **91-210-88-40.** Reservations required. Main courses 37€–64€; fixed-price menus 132€–165€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 2–4pm; Mon–Sat 8pm–1am. Closed Aug. Metro: Gregorio Marañón.

Zalacaín ★★ INTERNATIONAL One of Madrid's pioneers of the Basque interpretation of French nouvelle cuisine, Zalacaín set a high bar when it opened in 1973. Still revered by many older gourmets, the magical dining room is reached by an illuminated walk from Paseo de la Castellana and housed at the garden end of a modern apartment complex. Zalacaín is small, exclusive, and expensive—and dining here always feels like a special occasion. The cuisine remains innovative and takes its inspiration from the seasons, offering beef steak in red wine with caramelized pearl onions in winter, or grilled venison with a prune sauce in the fall. Fish is superb, especially lobster stew with *haricots verts* or grouper baked with black-truffle oil.

Álvarez de Baena 4. www.restaurantezalacain.com. ☎ **91-561-48-40.** Reservations required. Jacket and tie required for men. Main courses 31€–48€; fixed-price menu 104€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:15–4pm and 9pm–12:30am; Sat 9pm–12:30am. Closed Easter week and Aug. Metro: Gregorio Marañón.

EXPENSIVE

Alkalde ★ BASQUE For decades, Alkalde has been known for serving top-quality Spanish food in an old tavern setting, and it continues to do so exceedingly well. Decorated like a Basque inn, it has beamed ceilings with hams hanging from the rafters. Upstairs is a large *típico* tavern; downstairs is a maze of stone-sided cellars that are pleasantly cool in summer (although the whole place is air-conditioned).

Basque cookery is Spain's best, or at least its most prestigious, and Alkalde honors that noble tradition. Begin with the cream of crabmeat soup, followed by *gambas a la plancha* (grilled shrimp). Other recommended dishes include *mero en salsa verde* (brill in green sauce), trout Alkalde, and stuffed peppers. The dessert specialty is *copa Cardinal* (ice cream colorfully topped with fruit).

Jorge Juan 10. www.alkalderestaurante.com. ☎ **91-576-33-59.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–40€; *menú del día* 52€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Metro: Retiro or Serrano. Bus: 19, 20, or 28.

Dassa Bassa ★★ SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL Right across from Puerta de Alcalá, this hot dining ticket run by a chef who is a TV personality in his own right attracts celebrities, models, fashionistas, and VIPs at large—which means that getting a table can be difficult. The place is expensive but suitable for an extravagant night out on the town. Lighted stairs lead to a subterranean whitewashed *caveau,* where the cuisine soars to great heights. The chef is Darío Barrio, and his wife, Itziar, is the maitre d'. Barrio trained with "the master," fabled chef Ferran Adrià, hailed as Spain's greatest. Rather than being a slavish imitator, though, Barrio forges ahead with his own style—exemplified by the mashed potato and truffle. You might enjoy a chilled almond soup poured around ginger ale gelée, or else dried codfish and trout eggs. We'd recommend the boned chunk of oxtail with wine and chocolate (yes, you read that right), based on a recipe given to the chef by his grandmother.

Villalar 7. www.dassabassa.com. ☎ **91-576-73-97.** Reservations required. Main courses 25€–30€; fixed-price menus 25€–80€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Aug 1–21. Metro: Retiro.

Goizeko Wellington ★★ BASQUE Some of the best Basque cuisine in Madrid, arguably the very best, is served within the elegant confines of the long-established Hotel Wellington. If you arrive early, have an aperitif in the swanky English Bar, where there is live music nightly from 7pm. Chef Jesús Santos specializes in what is called "High Basque" cookery, meaning only the most refined and elegant of dishes—not the more earthy cuisine enjoyed in the robust taverns of northeastern Spain. Roast suckling pig is one of the more enduring specialties, as is freshly caught turbot. One of the all-time classic Basque dishes is prepared with great skill here—fried pieces of codfish in a "union" with roasted red peppers. The lobster ravioli with a seafood cream sauce is a perfect example of that classic dish. The chef secures fresh fish flown in from the Spanish coast, and the oysters, tuna, and top-quality prawns, among other dishes, are amazingly fresh even though dished up in inland Madrid.

In the Hotel Wellington, Villanueva 34. www.goizekogaztelupe.com. ☎ **91-653-06-16.** Reservations required. Main courses 28€–42€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Closed 2nd and 3rd weeks in Aug. Metro: Banco de España.

La Paloma ★ BASQUE/FRENCH Chef/owner Segundo Alonso, celebrated as the chef de cuisine in other people's restaurants, brought his signature contemporary Basque cuisine (with a dollop of French nouvelle) to his own venue. The restaurant occupies a nostalgic old restored house with high ceilings and wooden beams. Alonso is a champion of robust food, especially offal and pigs' trotters. Go for the gusto and order some, or you could settle for the equally celebrated wood pigeon stuffed with foie gras. La Paloma also does a seafood twist on lasagna with crabmeat, spinach, and leeks, as well as a fine *rabo de toro* stewed in red-wine sauce. The best fish dish is grilled turbot with tomato paste and thyme. Or try sea urchin gratinéed and served with quail eggs. For dessert, sample the fresh dates with Chantilly cream or a velvety almond mousse with cinnamon ice cream.

Jorge Juan 39. www.rtelapaloma.com. ☎ **91-576-86-92.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:45pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Velázquez or Vergara.

Pan de Lujo ★★ MEDITERRANEAN/ASIAN Artful and elegant, with a battery of lights that are almost breathtaking, this big-windowed restaurant near Parque del Retiro has earned rave reviews for its interior design and its cuisine. Alberto Chicote, one of the city's most famous chefs, mixes Asian and Mediterranean ideas in ways that have pleased late-night Madrileños. Some of Spain's finest regional produce goes into the imaginative, creative dishes served here. One notable entree is poached red snapper with crisp baby vegetables. Some areas of the floor in the restaurant are lit from beneath, creating the illusion that diners and staff are bathed in patterns of light that subtly change throughout the course of a meal.

Calle Jorge Juan 20. www.pandelujo.es. ☎ **91-436-11-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 19€–42€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Serrano or Retiro.

MODERATE

Iroco ★ FUSION Named for a tree native to the continent of Africa, this welcoming restaurant in the Salamanca district has walls with botanical prints. It offers one of Madrid's prettiest outdoor eating spaces in its little central courtyard. When making a reservation (if it's a fair day), ask for a garden table in the rear. The fusion cuisine, with a lot of inspiration from Asia, is elaborately prepared and beautifully presented. Main dishes are best accompanied by fine wines from Rioja or Ribera del Duero. For appetizers, sample the white fish salad drizzled with a Jerez (sherry) vinaigrette, or try the prawn-stuffed rolls. The vegetable tempuras are so good here that even a carnivore might be tempted. Eggplant (aubergine) lasagna, studded with fresh mushrooms, rests under a layer of creamy mozzarella. Hake comes in an asparagus sauce. And fresh fish is flown in daily from Galicia.

Calle Velásquez 18. www.grupovips.com. ✆ **91-431-73-81.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–25€; fixed-price lunch menu 25€. AE, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Metro: Goya.

Senzone Restaurant ★★ INTERNATIONAL On the ground floor of the chic Hospes Madrid (p. 141), this is a showcase restaurant for the cuisine of a young and talented chef, Paco Morales. The elBulli alumnus is brilliantly assisted by his wife, Rut Cotroneo, one of Spain's brightest sommeliers. The dishes Morales creates are not just culinary statements but works of art, at least in presentation. He knows how to add that extra special taste to create a flavor sensation—for example, he dusts squid with macadamia nuts, and he serves a sea urchin broth with a silken kohlrabi custard. He places his emphasis on healthful and natural foods. Arrive early to spend time in a trio of elegantly furnished bars and lounges, one a dark-wood-paneled library with leather furniture and windows fronting Puerta de Alcalá. There is also a large outdoor *terraza* lit by candles.

Plaza de la Independencia 3. www.hospes.com. ✆ **91-432-29-11.** Reservations required. Main courses 20€–26€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Metro: Retiro.

Teatriz ★ ITALIAN Decorated by the famed French architect and designer Philippe Starck, this old theater is now a top-notch Italian restaurant. The dishes are genuine and cleverly crafted. Launch yourself toward fresh mozzarella with tomatoes in virgin olive oil. For a main dish, try the Iberian pork tenderloin wrapped in Speck (dried ham), or roast rack of lamb served with sun-dried tomatoes and a rosemary gravy. Another delight is the Alaskan wild salmon drizzled with a 13-spice oil and served with an aromatic couscous. Theater seats have long given way to dining tables, but Starck kept many of the elements of the old theater. As you head for the restrooms, you encounter a stunning fountain of marble, silver, and gold bathed in a bluish light, making you think you're in a nightclub. The kitchen closes at midnight, but the bar remains open until 3am.

Calle Hermosilla 15. www.grupovips.com. ✆ **91-577-53-79.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–25€; menú completo 28€ for lunch only. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9:30pm–12:30am. Metro: Serrano.

Viavélez ★★★ SPANISH A brilliant chef, Paco Ron, started out in a modest place in a small fishing village in northern Asturias. Soon gourmets heard of him and were beating a path to his door. Even Michelin discovered him there, awarding him a star. Here in Madrid, you can discover his savory cuisine, perhaps beginning with his clam-laden potato stew that is about the best you are likely to taste in the capital. Even mayonnaise here tastes wonderful since it's homemade and laced with fresh herbs. Perhaps you'll get a big dab of it with shards of house-cured duck confit. Another specialty is a salpicón (seafood salad) of lobster that is flavored with a tangy jolt of pepper. Ron cooks with a precise technique and an unerring instinct to produce splendid dishes, often given a regional accent from his native province.

Av. General Perón 10. www.restauranteviavelez.com. ✆ **91-579-95-39.** Reservations required. Main courses 20€–31€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 2–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sun 2–4pm. Closed 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Santiago Bernabeu.

INEXPENSIVE

Foster's Hollywood ☺ AMERICAN When your craving for U.S. fast food becomes overwhelming and you can't quite stoop to Burger King or McDonald's, head here. When Foster's opened in 1971, it was not only the first American-style restaurant in Spain, but one of the first in Europe. Since then, it has expanded to 27 restaurants in Madrid and even dipped its toe into the U.S. A popular hangout for both locals and visiting Yanks, it offers a choice of dining rooms, ranging from classic club to faux film studio with props. The varied menu includes Tex-Mex selections, ribs, steaks, sandwiches, freshly made salads, and, as its signature offering, hamburgers grilled over natural charcoal.

Paseo de la Castellana 116–118. www.fostershollywood.es. ✆ **91-564-63-08.** Main courses 9€–18€; fixed-price lunch menu 11€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 1–5pm and 8pm–midnight; Fri–Sat 1pm–1am. Metro: Nuevo Ministerio.

Mosaiq ★ 💰 ARABIAN This trio of colorfully and elegantly decorated dining rooms with low tables and such touches as Moroccan pillows and hassocks has become a darling of the city. Taking some literary liberty, the chef calls his kitchen "a thousand and one delights." The cuisine is well prepared and authentically North African/Middle Eastern. For a casual introduction, order some hummus along with brochettes of shrimp and lamb kofta redolent of cardamom. The chicken tagine with preserved lemon and green olives is a special temptation, as is the tuna steak with fresh herbs. For dessert, a variety of Arabic pastries are prepared fresh daily.

Calle Caracas 21. www.mosaiqrestaurante.com. ✆ **91-308-44-46.** Reservations required. Main courses 10€–19€; *menú degustación* 25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Rubén Darío.

Gran Vía & Plaza de España

El Mentidero de la Villa ★ MEDITERRANEAN The Mentidero ("Gossip Shop," in English) is a truly multicultural synthesis, combining contemporary Spanish cuisine with a broader Mediterranean palate and a Japanese sensibility in the presentation. The technique, however, remains classical—no foams, no liquid nitrogen, no spherification. Run by Borja Anabitarte and José Ynglada, the kitchen plays with such adventuresome combinations as fried duck liver with caramelized eggplant; lasagna with mushrooms and duck liver; noisettes of veal with tarragon; filet steak with a sauce of mustard and brown sugar; and medallions of venison with purée of chestnut and celery. The highly successful restaurant moved in 2011, and the new decor lets the food take center stage.

Almagro, 20. www.mentiderodelavilla.es. ✆ **91-308-12-85.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–25€; fixed-price menus 60€–75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–4:30pm and 9pm–midnight; Sat 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Metro: Alonso Martínez.

Zahara Restaurante Cervercería ☺ AMERICAN Madrileños flock to this fixture on Gran Vía for casual American food before or after a movie at one of the nearby Plaza de España multiplexes. They also hunker down with beers to stare at the flatscreen televisions mounted all through the cavernous restaurant whenever Real Madrid is playing, making Zahara a good (and cheap) spot to join soccer fans. The house special is the Zahara burger, an unusually juicy beef burger topped with bacon, cheese, a fried egg, lettuce, and tomato. It's served with fries and a draft beer.

Gran Vía 31. ✆ **91-521-84-24.** Plates 6€–13€. MC, V. Sun–Thurs 9am–1am; Fri–Sat 9am–2am. Metro: Callao.

Art District & Paseos

VERY EXPENSIVE

Horcher ★ GERMAN/INTERNATIONAL Horcher originated in Berlin in 1904. In 1943, prompted by a tip from a high-ranking German officer that Germany was losing the war, Herr Horcher moved his restaurant to Madrid. For years, it was considered the best dining room in the city by gourmets wed to the Continental classics, but fierce competition from more modern restaurants has stolen even that crown. Nevertheless, the restaurant is a magnificent period piece, continuing its grand Escoffier traditions, including excellent service.

You might try the skate or shrimp tartare, or the distinctive warm hake salad. The venison stew with green pepper and orange peel, and the crayfish with parsley and cucumber, are both typical of the elegant fare served with style. In autumn the menu features game, including venison, wild boar, and roast wild duck. Other main courses include stockfish gratiné with eggplant and veal scallops with truffles and port-wine sauce.

Alfonso XII, no. 6. www.restaurantehorcher.com. ✆ **91-522-07-31.** Reservations required. Jackets and ties required for men. Main courses 26€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sat 8:30pm–midnight. Metro: Retiro or Banco.

EXPENSIVE

Astrid y Gastón ★ PERUVIAN This restaurant is a posh import from Peru, a country whose cuisine is currently one of the hottest in the world. Here chefs tempt Madrileños with a range of ceviches from the country that originated the dish. In a rainbow of tastes and flavors, ceviche is made with such delicacies as hake cheeks or clams flavored with cilantro, curry, and fresh lime. An authentic Peruvian dish—though not for every taste—is corn crepes topped with suckling-pig skin and a chile-and-honey marmalade. Service is first rate, and the wine list is fairly priced.

13 Paseo de la Castellana. www.astridygastonmadrid.com. ✆ **91-702-62-62.** Reservations required. Main courses 24€–32€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Metro: Gregorio Marañón.

El Borbollón BASQUE/FRENCH The welcoming Castro family presides over this little charmer lying between Calle de Serrano and Paseo de Recoletos, near both Plaza Cibeles and Plaza Colón. Eduardo Castro, the chef, is a local personality and a whiz in the kitchen. He is known for such dishes as a perfectly grilled *rape* (monkfish). Steak is cooked with savory green peppers, and a chateaubriand appears enticingly drenched in whiskey. Fresh turbot and hake appear regularly on the menu, and rich game dishes such as partridge are featured in the autumn. Choice cutlets of Segovian lamb are awakened with garlic cloves. Fresh flowers and bucolic art make for a soothing decor.

Calle Recoletos 7. www.elborbollon.es. ✆ **91-431-41-34.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–38€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 9pm–midnight. Metro: Retiro or Plaza Colón.

Gran Café de Gijón SPANISH Come here for food and atmosphere as it was in Franco's heyday. This 1888 institution is one of the last Belle Epoque cafes remaining, and it was a haunt of the literati before they left the country during the Civil War. Open windows look out onto the wide *paseo,* and a large terrace is perfect for sun worshipers and people-watchers. Along one side of the cafe is a stand-up bar; on the lower level is a restaurant. In summer, sit in the garden to enjoy a *blanco y negro* (black coffee with ice cream) or a mixed drink.

Paseo de Recoletos 21. www.cafegijon.com. ✆ **91-521-54-25.** Reservations required for restaurant. Main courses 20€–34€; fixed-price menus 32€–75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 7:30am–2am. Metro: Banco de España, Colón, or Recoletos.

Viridiana ★★ INTERNATIONAL Viridiana—named after the 1961 Luis Buñuel film classic—is known for the creative imagination of its chef and part owner, Abraham García. A film historian as well as a self-taught chef, he lined the walls with stills from Buñuel films. Menu specialties are contemporary adaptations of traditional recipes, and they change frequently according to availability of ingredients. Examples of the singular cooking include sauté of filet of beef with fresh porcini mushrooms; roast pigeon with pearl barley, chestnuts, and black chanterelles; and honey-glazed roast lamb with saffron couscous. The food is sublime, and the ambience invites you to relax as you enjoy dishes that dazzle the eye, notably venison and rabbit arranged on a plate with fresh greens to evoke an autumnal scene in a forest.

Juan de Mena 14. www.restauranteviridiana.com. ✆ **91-523-44-78.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 30€–37€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Closed Easter week. Metro: Banco de España.

MODERATE

Café Restaurante El Espejo ★ INTERNATIONAL To read the menu here is to wipe away the last century of culinary innovation. But if classic Continental cuisine as it was intended by Auguste Escoffier is your thing, you have come to the right place. The food belongs to the same era as the perfectly crafted Art Nouveau decor. Upon entering, you'll find yourself in a charming cafe/bar, where many visitors linger before heading toward the spacious dining room. If the weather is good, you can sit at one of the outdoor tables and be served by uniformed waiters who carry food across the busy street to a green area flanked by trees. The tables inside have charming views of the tile maidens with vines and flowers entwined in their hair. Some good dishes that are part of the regular repertoire include lasagna with prawns and fresh vegetables; baked hake with a cream sauce and shellfish; and sirloin steaks grilled far too long for American tastes, but pleasing to Europeans. Try profiteroles with cream and chocolate sauce for dessert.

Paseo de Recoletos 31. www.restauranteelespejo.com. ✆ **91-308-23-47.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–22€; fixed-price menus 30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Metro: Colón. Bus: 5, 27, 45, or 150.

TRADITIONAL *tascas*

Don't starve while you're waiting around for Madrid's fashionable 9:30 or 10pm dinner hour. Throughout the city you'll find *tascas,* bars that serve wine and platters of tempting hot and cold tapas. Below, we list some favorites. Keep in mind that you can often save euros by ordering at the bar rather than occupying a table.

Casa Mingo SPANISH Casa Mingo has been known for decades for its cider, both still and bubbly. The perfect accompanying tidbit is a piece of the local Asturian *cabrales* (goat cheese), but the roast chicken is the specialty of the house, with a large number of helpings served daily. There's no formality here; customers share big tables under the vaulted ceiling in the dining room. In summer, the staff sets tables and wooden chairs out on the sidewalk. This is not so much a restaurant as a *bodega/taverna* (bar/tavern) that serves food. *Paseo de la Florida 34. www.casamingo.es.* ✆ ***91-547-79-18.*** *Main courses 2€–10€. No credit cards. Daily 11am–midnight. Metro: Principe Pío. Bus: 41, 46, or 75.*

Cervecería La Alemana TAPAS This place earned its name because of its long-ago German clients. Opening directly onto one of the most traditional tapas plazas of Madrid, it clings to its early-20th-century traditions. Young Madrileños are fond of stopping in for a mug of draft beer. You can sit at one of the tables, leisurely sipping beer or wine—the waiters make no attempt to hurry you along. To accompany your beverage, try the fried sardines or a Spanish omelet. Many of the *tascas* surrounding Plaza Santa Ana are crowded and noisy, but La Alemana is usually tame enough to have a conversation. *Plaza de Santa Ana 6.* ✆ ***91-429-70-33.*** *Beer 2.50€; tapas 4€–10€. MC, V. Wed–Mon 10am–2am. Metro: Tirso de Molina or Puerta del Sol. Bus: 6, 17, or 56.*

Cervecería Santa Bárbara TAPAS Unique in Madrid, Cervecería Santa Bárbara is an outlet for a beer factory, and the management has done a lot to make it modern and inviting. Hanging globe lights and spinning ceiling fans create an attractive ambience, as does the black-and-white checkerboard marble floor. You go here for beer, of course: *cerveza negra* (black beer) or *cerveza dorada* (golden beer). The local brew is best accompanied by homemade potato chips or by fresh shrimp, lobster, crabmeat, or barnacles. You can either stand at the counter or go directly to one of the wooden tables for waiter service. *Plaza de Santa Bárbara 8. www.cerveceriasantabarbara.com.* ✆ ***91-319-04-49.*** *Beer 2€–4€; tapas 2.50€–14€. MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight. Metro: Alonso Martínez. Bus: 3, 7, or 21.*

Taberna Toscana TAPAS Many Madrileños begin their nightly *tasca*-crawl here. The ambience is that of a village inn far removed from 21st-century Madrid. You sit on crude country stools beneath age-darkened beams from which hang sausages, peppers, and sheaves of golden wheat. The long, tiled bar is loaded with tasty tidbits, including the house specialties: *habas* (broad beans) with Spanish ham, and chorizo (a sausage of red peppers and pork)—almost meals in themselves. Especially delectable are the kidneys in sherry sauce and the snails in hot sauce. *Manuel Fernández y González 10. www.tabernatoscana.es.* ✆ ***91-429-60-31.*** *Beer 3€; glass of wine from 1.50€; tapas 4€–18€. MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Metro: Sol or Sevilla.*

La Gamella ★★ INTERNATIONAL With its Spanish market food and emulation of the grand New York restaurants of the 20th century, La Gamella is a vibrant alternative to the prestigious Horcher (p. 110) just across the street. This restaurant occupies the 19th-century building where the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset was born. The russet-colored, high-ceilinged design invites customers to relax. The founder has prepared his delicate and light-textured specialties for Madrid's most talked-about artists and merchants, many of whom he knows and greets personally between sessions in his kitchen.

Start, perhaps, with cream of lentil soup with porcini mushrooms, and go on to such temptations as ravioli filled with pumpkin and almonds with a creamy herb sauce, or pan-seared fresh codfish in a mushroom sauce. Another specialty is baby squid stuffed with caramelized onions and served with black pasta.

Alfonso XII, no. 4. www.lagamella.com. ✆ **91-532-45-09.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–26€; fixed-price menu 25€; *menú degustación* 36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sat 9pm–midnight. Closed 4 days around Easter. Metro: Retiro. Bus: 19.

SHOPPING

Spain has always been known for its craftspeople, many of whom still work in the time-honored and labor-intensive traditions of their grandparents. It's hard to go wrong if you stick to the beautiful handcrafted objects—hand-painted tiles, ceramics, and porcelain; hand-woven rugs; handmade sweaters; and intricate embroideries. And, of course, Spain produces some of the world's finest leather. Jewelry, especially gold set with Mallorca pearls, represents good value and unquestionable luxury.

Some of Madrid's art galleries are known throughout Europe for discovering and encouraging new talent. Antiques are sold in highly sophisticated retail outlets. Better suited to the budgets of many travelers are the weekly flea markets.

Spain continues to make inroads into the fashion world. Its young designers are regularly featured in the fashion magazines of Europe. Excellent shoes are available, some highly fashionable. But be advised that prices for shoes and quality clothing are generally higher in Madrid than in the United States.

Major stores are open (in most cases) Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 8pm. Many small stores close for siesta between 1:30 and 4:30pm. Of course, there is never any set schedule, and hours can vary greatly from store to store, depending on the idiosyncrasies and schedules of the owner.

Many art and antiques dealers will crate and ship bulky objects for an additional fee. Whereas it usually pays to have heavy objects shipped by sea, it might surprise you that in some cases you can pay almost the same price to ship crated goods by airplane. Of course, it depends on the distance your crate will have to travel overland to the nearest international port, which in many cases, for the purposes of relatively small-scale shipments by individual clients, is Barcelona.

Shopping Areas

THE CENTER The sheer diversity of shops in Madrid's center is staggering. Their densest concentration lies immediately north of Puerta del Sol, radiating from Calle del Carmen, Calle Montera, and Calle Preciados.

CALLE MAYOR & CALLE DEL ARENAL Unlike their more stylish neighbors to the north of Puerta del Sol, shops in this district to the west tend to be small, slightly dusty enclaves of coin and stamp dealers; family-owned souvenir shops; clockmakers; and sellers of military paraphernalia. An abundance of stores sell musical scores.

GRAN VÍA Conceived, designed, and built in the 1910s and 1920s as a showcase for the city's best shops, hotels, and restaurants, the Gran Vía has since been eclipsed by other shopping districts. Its Art Nouveau/Art Deco glamour still survives in the hearts of most Madrileños, however. The bookshops here are among the best in the city, as are outlets for fashion, shoes, jewelry, furs, and handcrafted accessories from all regions of Spain.

CHUECA Youthful, up-and-coming designers can be found in the shops of Almirante and surrounding streets, including Argensola, Santa Teresa, and Justiniano. Some of the best buys on shoes in Madrid are found in the boutiques along Augusto Figueroa, where many shops have discounts on fashion footwear.

EL RASTRO It's the biggest flea market in Spain, drawing collectors, dealers, buyers, and hopefuls from throughout Madrid and its suburbs. The makeshift stalls are at their most frenetic on Sunday morning. For more information, see "Flea Markets," p. 118.

PLAZA MAYOR Under the arcades of the square itself, artists sell their lithographs and oil paintings. Every weekend there's a loosely organized market for stamp and coin collectors. Souvenir shops line three of four sides.

OFF CALLE MARQUÉS Viudo de Pontejos, which runs east from Plaza Mayor, is one of the city's headquarters for the sale of cloth, thread, and buttons. Also running east, on Calle de Zaragoza, are silversmiths and jewelers. On Calle Postas, you'll find housewares, underwear, soap powders, and other household items.

NEAR THE CARRERA DE SAN JERÓNIMO Several blocks east of Puerta del Sol is Madrid's densest concentration of gift shops, crafts shops, and antiques dealers. Its most interesting streets include Calle del Prado, Calle de las Huertas, and Plaza de las Cortes. The neighborhood is pricey, so don't expect bargains here.

NORTHWEST MADRID A few blocks east of Parque del Oeste is an upscale neighborhood that's well stocked with luxury goods and household staples. Calle de la Princesa, its main thoroughfare, has shops selling shoes, handbags, fashion, gifts, and children's clothing. Thanks to the presence of the university nearby, there's a dense concentration of bookstores, especially on Calle Isaac Peral and Calle Fernando el Católico, several blocks north and northwest from the subway stop of Argüelles.

SALAMANCA Known throughout Spain as the quintessential upper-class neighborhood, Salamanca has the shops of major Spanish designers as well as outlets run by interior decorators, furniture shops, fur and jewelry shops, and several department stores. The main streets of this district are Calle de Serrano and Calle de Velázquez. The district lies northeast of the center of Madrid, a few blocks north of Parque del Retiro. Its most central Metro stops are Serrano and Velázquez.

Metro
Serrano
LOEWE
LOEWE
LOEWE

The ritzy Salamanca neighborhood.

Shopping A to Z

ANTIQUES

In addition to the shop listed below, El Rastro (see "Flea Markets," p. 118) is a source of antiques.

Mercado Galerias Piquer The largest of the antiques enclaves on Ribera de Curtidores, this market has some of the better neighborhood dealers in antiques and collectibles. The shops sell everything from genuine Spanish antiques to would-be antiques. You can find some good deals here in Spanish ceramics, much of it from Andalucía, and even vintage brass. Some items such as "Franco's chamber pot" are a bit fancifully labeled. Open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 9pm, Sunday 10:30am to 2:30pm. Ribera de Curtidores 29. Metro: Puerta de Toledo.

ART

Galería Juana de Aizpuru This gallery first opened in Sevilla in 1970 and became so successful that it moved to Madrid in 1983. Today it is one of the most prestigious galleries in the city, known for its avant-garde art and sculptures. It features not only some of Spain's best artists, but also many exciting works by international artists. Open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8:30pm. Calle Barquillo 44. www.juanadeaizpuru.com. ✆ **91-310-55-61.** Closed Aug. Metro: Chuca.

Galería Kreisler ★ One successful entrepreneur on Madrid's art scene is Ohio-born Edward Kreisler, whose gallery, now run by his son, Juan, specializes in figurative and contemporary paintings, sculptures, and graphics. The gallery prides itself on occasionally displaying and selling the works of artists who are critically acclaimed and displayed in museums in Spain. Open Monday through Friday from 10:30am to 2pm and 5:30 to 9pm, Saturday 11am to 2pm. Hermosilla 8. www.galeriakreisler.com. ✆ **91-576-16-62.** Metro: Serrano. Bus: 27, 45, or 150.

Galería Soledad Lorenzo To see some of the works of major Spanish artists today, head to this brightly lit, large gallery in the Chamberí district. Painters as famous as Miguel Barceló or Antoni Tàpies have exhibited here, and the opening of a new show is often a major artistic event. Open Monday 4:30 to 8:30pm, Tuesday and Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8:30pm (closed evenings mid-June to mid-Sept). Orfila 5. www.soledadlorenzo.com. ✆ **91-308-28-87.** Metro: Alonso Martínez.

Plaza Conde de Barajas On Sundays, painters and other visual artists gather in this small plaza near Plaza Major to display and sell their work. It is also a lively cafe scene. Open daily 10:30am to 2pm. Plaza Conde de Barajas. Metro: Sol or Ópera.

CAPES

Capas Seseña Founded shortly after the turn of the 20th century, this shop manufactures and sells wool capes for both women and men. The wool comes from the mountain town of Béjar, near Salamanca. Celebrities spotted donning Seseña capes have included Picasso, Hemingway, and, more recently, Hillary Clinton and daughter Chelsea. Open Monday through Friday from 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8pm, Saturday from 10am to 2pm. Cruz 23. www.sesena.com. ✆ **91-531-68-40.** Metro: Sevilla or Sol. Bus: 5, 39, 51, or 52.

CERAMICS

Antigua Casa Talavera ★ "The first house of Spanish ceramics" has wares that include regional styles from every major area of Spain, including Talavera, Toledo, Manises, Valencia, Puente del Arzobispo, Alcora, Granada, and Sevilla. Pitchers, dinnerware, tea sets, and vases are all handmade. Inside one of the showrooms is a selection of tiles painted with scenes from bullfights, dances, and folklore. At its present location since 1904, the shop is only a short walk from Plaza de Santo Domingo. Open Monday to Friday from 10am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8pm, Saturday from 10am to 1:30pm. Isabel la Católica 2. ✆ **91-547-34-17.** Metro: Santo Domingo. Bus: 1, 2, 44, 46, 70, 75, or 148.

CRAFTS

El Arco de los Cuchilleros Artesanía de Hoy Set under the arcade in the southwest corner of Plaza Mayor, this shop is entirely devoted to unusual craft items from throughout Spain. The merchandise is one of a kind and in most cases contemporary; it includes a changing array of pottery, leather, textiles, woodcarvings, glassware, wickerwork, papier-mâché, and silver jewelry. The hardworking owners deal directly with the artisans who produce each item, ensuring a wide inventory of handicrafts. The multilingual staff is familiar with applying for tax-free status of purchases. Open daily from 11am to 8pm. Plaza Mayor 9. ✆ **91-365-26-80.** Metro: Sol or Ópera.

DEPARTMENT STORES

El Corte Inglés ★★ This flagship of the largest department store chain in Madrid sells hundreds of souvenirs and Spanish handicrafts—damascene steelwork from Toledo, flamenco dolls, and embroidered shawls. Some astute buyers report that it also sells glamorous fashion articles, such as Pierre Balmain designs, for about a third less than in most European capitals. The basement level also houses a terrific grocery store with both household essentials and gourmet foods. Services include interpreters, currency-exchange windows, and parcel delivery either to a local hotel or overseas. Open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 10pm. Preciados 3. www.elcorteingles.es. ✆ **91-379-80-00.** Metro: Sol.

ESPADRILLES

Castañer ★★ This is the premier shop for espadrilles in Spain, having been founded in 1927 by Luis Castañer and run today by his grandchildren. The swanky Hermès uses Castañer for its own line of espadrilles, and everybody from Marc Jacobs to Kate Spade has worn these handcrafted shoes, which today can make statements in high fashion. This small boutique occupies its original location in Madrid's premier shopping district of Salamanca. The espadrilles with ankle-wrap ribbons are a summer favorite, but this footwear comes in all shapes, sizes, and colors, from platforms to slip-ons. Open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 8:30pm. Calle de Claudio Coello 51. www.castaner.com. ✆ **91-578-18-90.** Metro: Serrano.

Casa Hernanz ★★★ If you are more interested in buying espadrilles from the shop that puts stylish espadrilles on the masses rather than the shoe store to the stars, join the lines outside the venerable Hernanz, just outside Plaza Mayor, where Jesus Hernanz carries on the family espadrille business that began in 1865. A simple pair suitable for the beach (or walking around the city, for that matter) won't set you back more than 10€. Toledo 18. ✆ **91-366-54-50.** Metro: Sol.

FASHION

For the man on a budget who wants to dress reasonably well, the best outlet for off-the-rack men's clothing is one of the branches of El Corte Inglés department store chain (see above). Most men's boutiques in Madrid are very expensive and may not be worth the investment.

Adolfo Domínguez This shop caters to fashion-conscious young men and women. Adolfo Domínguez, a designer from Galicia in northwest Spain, is known for a cool, laid-back style—too informal in the opinion of some critics. A wide selection of shoes, some quite fancy, are sold, as is sports clothing. In general, you get good value here if you don't find the style too austere. Open Monday to Saturday 10:15am to 2pm and 5 to 8:30pm. Ortega y Gasset 4. www.adolfodominguez.com. ✆ **91-576-00-84.** Metro: Núñez de Balboa.

Agatha Ruiz de la Prada This designer, who reached initial fame during the *Movida* era of the 1980s, has made a comeback. She operates on the ground floor of a Chamberí salon, originally constructed by her grandfather. She is known for her stylish yet easy-to-wear informal clothing. You might want to check her out to see what the style-conscious Madrileño woman is wearing this season. Open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. In August the shop is also open on Saturday 10am to 2pm. Calle Serrano 27. www.agatharuizdelaprada.com. ✆ **91-319-05-01.** Metro: Serrano.

Biscuit This fashion boutique showcases young Spanish designers. A retail space with a 19th-century Victorian decor, this is where you'll find dozens of unique brands of women's clothing. It attracts lovers of limited editions of chic women's clothing, with special emphasis on the elegantly casual styles. Ask for a view of their limited-edition amulets, pendants, and medallions. A very small percentage of items are for men. Open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8:30pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm. Calle Divino Pastor 15. www.biscuitstore.com. ✆ **91-591-62-75.** Metro: Bilbao or Tribunal.

H.A.N.D.—Have a Nice Day ★ Leading Parisian designers such as Stella Forest and Manoush are showcased in this exclusive boutique. The owners, Thierry Bonafe and Stephane Tremoulet, travel to Paris every 3 weeks to bring the latest in French fashion to Madrid. Fashion magazines in Spain have praised the owners' taste in trend-setting fashion. Open Monday to Saturday 11am to 2:30pm and 5 to 9pm. Hortaleza 26. www.hand-haveaniceday.es. ✆ **91-521-51-52.** Metro: Chueca.

Herrero Piel The sheer size and buying power of this retail outlet for women's clothing make it a reasonably priced emporium for all kinds of feminine garb as well as for gentlemen's articles. Open Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 8:15pm, and first Sunday of each month noon to 8:15pm. Preciados 7. ✆ **91-521-29-90.** Metro: Sol or Callao.

Zara A top name in fashion, Zara sells quality clothing, with most prices considered a good cost-to-value ratio. From party suits to office wear, the collection is wide ranging. Open Monday to Saturday 10am to 8:30pm. Princesa 58. www.zara.com. ✆ **91-549-16-16.** Metro: Argüelles.

FLEA MARKETS

El Rastro ★ Foremost among markets is El Rastro (translated as either "flea market" or "thieves' market"), occupying a roughly triangular district of streets and plazas a few minutes' walk south of Plaza Mayor. Its center is Plaza Cascorro and Ribera de Curtidores. The market comes alive every Sunday morning and will delight anyone attracted to a mishmash of fascinating junk interspersed with antiques, bric-a-brac, and paintings. The days of bargains largely faded with Franco himself. Today's vendors seem to know the price of everything. ***Note:*** Thieves are rampant here (hustling more than just antiques), so secure your wallet carefully and be alert. Plaza Cascorro and Ribera de Curtidores. www.elrastro.org. Metro: La Latina. Bus: 3 or 17.

El Rastro flea market.

GUITARS

Guitarras Ramírez ★★ This is the premier guitar shop in Spain. It began when 12-year-old José Ramírez became an apprentice for the famous guitar maker Francisco González in 1870. A decade later he founded his own guitar shop, and by 1882 had created the prototype for one of the first modern guitars. Today, the outlet is run by Amalia, the great-granddaughter of the founder. Many famous musicians have ordered guitars from her, including Andrés Segovia, Eric Clapton, and even George Harrison, who used one of the Ramírez guitars to record the famous Beatles' song "Help!" Open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm. 8 Calle de la Paz. www.guitarrasramirez.com. ✆ **91-531-42-29.** Metro: Sol.

LEATHER

Loewe ★★★ Since 1846, this has been the most elegant leather store in Spain. Its gold medal–winning designers have always kept abreast of changing tastes and styles, but the inventory retains a timeless chic. The store sells luggage, handbags, and jackets for men and women (in leather or suede). Open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 8pm. In addition to the Gran Vía location, two other branches carry much the same merchandise; they are located at Serrano 26 (✆ **91-577-60-56**) and at Serrano 34 (✆ **91-426-35-88**). The Serrano branches are open until 8:30pm. Gran Vía 8. www.loewe.com. ✆ **91-522-68-15.** Metro: Banco de España or Gran Vía.

Salvador Bachiller Outlet ★★ This contemporary designer is a Madrid institution for luggage, travel accessories, purses, and small leather goods—mostly sold in high-end department stores. But the firm also has a discount outlet near Plaza Chueca just steps away from that district's bargain shoe stores. We've found shoulder bags and card holders and wallets marked down to a third to half their original retail price. If our luggage was destroyed in transit, we'd head here for sturdy hard-sided canvas suitcases with wheels. Best bargains are on the wilder colors—red, turquoise, pink—but at least they stand out in a sea of black bags. Buyer beware: Look for flaws, especially broken zippers. Gravina 11. www.salvadorbachiller.com. ✆ **91-523-30-37.** Metro: Chueca.

MARKETS

Mercado de San Miguel ★★ Just outside the walls of the Plaza Mayor, the long-dormant Beaux Arts food market has been updated for 21st-century shoppers, with more than three dozen vendors sheltered under the gigantic wood-and-iron roof. The Mercado originally opened in 1916, when it was meant to evoke Les Halles in Paris. Servants and homemakers of the time flocked here to stock their houses.

Today the vendors sell everything from fresh pastas and homemade pastries to cooking utensils and even fresh fish. Consider the place a stopover for an inexpensive lunch, as it offers a cafe, a beer tavern where tapas are sold, and a pastry shop selling freshly baked apple strudel, among other goodies. Open Monday to Wednesday and Sunday 10am to midnight, Thursday to Saturday 10am to 2am. Even at night Madrileños show up here for beer, tapas, wine, and even champagne and oysters. Plaza de San Miguel. www.mercadodesanmiguel.es. ✆ **91-542-49-39.** Metro: Ópera, Sol, or Tirso de Molina.

Mercado de la Paz ★★ Madrid retains a number of traditional food markets, but none can rival the exquisite presentation of just-misted fresh fish and shellfish, perfect vegetable specimens, carefully aged meats, fruit that is just ripe, decadents pastries, and dozens of different varieties of olives. If you consider yourself a foodie, this is the market where you can see the provender of top restaurants and buy saffron in bulk to take home. Ayala 28. www.mercadodelapaz.com. ✆ **91-435-07-43.** Metro: Velázquez.

PERFUMES

Alvarez Gómez ★ This is a marvelously old-fashioned *perfumería.* It's been around so long it's newly fashionable again. The shop markets its own fragrances, many based on almost-long-forgotten formulas. And even if you're not specifically looking for perfume, you'll find an array of unusual merchandise here, including jewelry and women's handbags and belts. Open Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm. Castellana 111. www.alvarezgomez.com. ✆ **91-555-59-61.** Metro: Cuzco.

Perfumerías Padilla This store sells a large, competitively priced assortment of Spanish and international scents for women. It has two branches next to one another: Carmen 8 is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 2:30pm and 4:30 to 8:30pm; Carmen 7 is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 8:30pm. Calle Carmen 7–8. http://perfumeriaspadilla.es. ✆ **91-521-90-70.** Metro: Sol.

PORCELAIN

Lladró This imposing outlet is devoted almost exclusively to Lladró porcelain. The staff can usually tell you about new designs and releases the Lladró company is planning for the near future. Open Monday to Saturday 10am to 8pm. Gran Vía 46. www.lladro.com. ✆ **91-435-51-12.** Metro: Rubén Darío.

SHOPPING MALLS

ABC Serrano Set within what used to function as the working premises of a well-known Madrileño newspaper *(ABC),* this is a complex of about 85 upscale boutiques that emphasize fashion, housewares, cosmetics, and art objects. On the premises, you'll find cafes and restaurants, lots of potted and flowering shrubbery, and acres and acres of Spanish marble and tile. Although each of the outfitters inside is independently owned and managed, most of them maintain hours of Monday through Saturday from 10am to 9pm, Sunday noon to 8pm. Serrano 61 or Castellana 34. www.abcserrano.com. ✆ **91-577-50-31.** Metro: Serrano.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Madrid abounds with dance halls, *tascas,* cafes, theaters, movie houses, and nightclubs. Because dinner is served late in Spain, nightlife doesn't really get underway until after 11pm, and it generally lasts until at least 3am—Madrileños are so fond of prowling at night that they are known around Spain as *gatos* (cats). If you arrive at 9:30pm at a club, you'll have the place all to yourself, assuming it's even open yet.

In most clubs, a one-drink minimum is the rule, but feel free to nurse that one drink through the entire evening's entertainment.

In summer, Madrid becomes a virtually free festival because the city sponsors a series of plays, concerts, and films. Pick up a copy of the *Guía del Ocio*

Crowds flock to the Puerta del Sol in the evening.

(available at most newsstands, in Spanish) for listings of these events. This guide provides information about occasional discounts for commercial events, such as the concerts that are given in Madrid's parks.

Although flamenco was born in Andalucía, Madrid has been central to the art form's revival since the early 1980s. Flamenco is alive and well in small clubs, peñas, and bars, usually in late-night shows that you will also find in *Ocio*. Avoid the pricy early-evening flamenco *tablaos* designed as tourist spectacle. Nightclubs also tend to be expensive, but since Madrid is preeminently a city of song and dance, you can often be entertained at very little cost—in fact, the price of a glass of wine or beer if you sit at a bar with live entertainment.

Discos likewise charge high admissions. They often open for what are erroneously called afternoon sessions (7–10pm). At an afternoon session the cost might be as low as 3€, rising to 15€ and beyond for a night session—that is, beginning at 11:30pm and lasting until the early morning hours. Therefore, if you're on a budget, go early, dance until 10pm, and then proceed to dinner. (You'll be eating at the fashionable hour.)

Nightlife is so plentiful in Madrid that the city can be roughly divided into the following "night zones." In all areas, it's prudent to exercise caution; avoid dark alleys and watch your belongings in crowds.

PLAZA MAYOR/PUERTA DEL SOL These are the most popular areas from the standpoint of both tradition and tourist interest. They are filled with tapas bars and *cuevas* (drinking caves). Here it is customary to begin a *tasca*-crawl from tavern to tavern, sampling the wine in each, along with a selection of tapas. The major streets for such a crawl are Cava de San Miguel, Cava Alta, and Cava Baja. You can order *pinchos y raciones* (tasty snacks and tidbits).

GRAN VÍA This area contains mainly cinemas and theaters. Most of the after-dark action takes place on small streets branching off the Gran Vía.

White Nights in Madrid

Nuits Blanches, or "White Nights," a frenetic all-night multivenue cultural bash, was launched in Paris in 2002. Since then, the concept has swept through several European capitals, including Madrid. Dates for the event vary from year to year. It is usually held in Madrid in late September; check for late-changing information at **http://lanocheenblanco.esmadrid.com**.

What to expect? The offerings seem endless, everything from street entertainment such as circus acts to jazz jam sessions. Of course, there are modern art shows, theatrical presentations, and music of every genre, even old-fashioned Spanish troubadour singing. Madrileños literally dance the night away until dawn's early light.

White Night events are free and often take place spontaneously throughout Madrid—not just in its historic core. Each city, including Madrid, has its own cultural theme.

PLAZA DE ISABEL II/PLAZA DE ORIENTE This is another area much frequented by tourists. Many restaurants and cafes flourish here, including the famous Café de Oriente (p. 103).

CHUECA Dozens of clubs along such streets as Hortaleza, Infantas, Barquillo, and San Lucas form the city's principal gay nightlife district. Inexpensive restaurants also abound, and a few marvelously tawdry girlie striptease joints still exist, though the shows are more camp than lurid. The neighborhood is quickly gentrifying, and the strong police presence has effectively ended the street drug trade popularized in Spanish cinema.

ARGÜELLES/MONCLOA For university students, this part of town sees most of the action. Many dance clubs are found here, along with alehouses and fast-food joints. The area is bounded by Pintor Rosales, Cea Bermúdez, Bravo Murillo, San Bernardo, and Conde Duque.

The Performing Arts

Madrid has a number of theaters, opera companies, and dance companies. To discover where and when specific cultural events are being performed, pick up a copy of *Guía del Ocio* at any city newsstand. The sheer volume of cultural offerings is staggering; for a concise summary of the highlights, see below. Tickets to dramatic and musical events usually range in price from 6€ to 200€. The concierges at most major hotels can usually get you tickets to specific concerts, if you are clear about your wishes. Of course, they charge a considerable markup, part of which is passed along to whichever agency originally booked the tickets.

You'll save money if you go directly to the box office. In the event your choice is sold out, you may be able to get tickets (with a reasonable markup) at **Localidades Galicia,** Plaza del Carmen 1 (www.bullfightticketsmadrid.com; ✆ **91-531-91-31;** Metro: Sol). This agency also markets tickets to bullfights and sporting events. It is open Tuesday through Saturday 9:30am to 1:30pm and from 4:30 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 1pm. In May, it's open daily 9am to 8pm.

You might also get discounts up to 50% on performance-day tickets through **Taquilla Ultimo Minuto,** Plaza del Carmen 1 (www.taquillaultimominuto.com). It is open Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 5 to 8pm, and Friday and Saturday 5 to 10pm.

MAJOR PERFORMING ARTS COMPANIES

Compañía Nacional de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas is an avant-garde troupe that performs new and often controversial works (in Spanish) by undiscovered writers. **Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico** (http://teatroclasico.mcu.es), as its name suggests, is devoted to the Spanish classics, including works by the ever-popular Lope de Vega and Tirso de Molina.

Among dance companies, **Ballet Nacional de España** (http://balletnacional.mcu.es) is devoted exclusively to Spanish ballet. Their performances are always well attended. The national lyrical ballet company is **Ballet Lírico Nacional.**

World-renowned flamenco sensation Antonio Canales and his troupe, **Ballet Flamenco Antonio Canales** (www.donquijote.org/culture), offer spirited high-energy performances. Productions are centered on Canales's impassioned *Torero,* his interpretation of a bullfighter and the physical and emotional struggles within the man. For tickets and information, call Madrid's comprehensive ticket agency, the previously recommended **Localidades Galicia,** Plaza del Carmen 1 (www.bullfightticketsmadrid.com; ✆ **91-531-91-31**). Tickets to other cultural events and virtually any event in Castile are also available here. Another agency for tickets is **El Corte Inglés** (www.elcorteingles.es/entradas; ✆ **90-240-02-22** or 90-222-44-11), which has satellite offices throughout Madrid.

Madrid's opera company is **Compañia del Teatro Real** (www.teatro-real.com), and its symphony orchestra is the outstanding **Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid** (www.osm.es). Spain's national orchestra, widely acclaimed on the Continent, is **Orquesta y Coro Nacional de España** (http://ocne.mcu.es/index.asp?l=en), which pays particular homage to Spanish composers.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Auditorio Nacional de Música Sheathed in slabs of Spanish granite, marble, and limestone, and capped with Iberian tiles, this hall is the ultramodern home of both the National Orchestra of Spain and the National Chorus of Spain. Standing just north of Madrid's Salamanca district, the hall is devoted exclusively to performances of symphonic, choral, and chamber music. In addition to the Auditorio Principal (Hall A), whose capacity is almost 2,300, there's a hall for chamber music (Hall B), as well as a small auditorium for intimate concerts. Príncipe de Vergara 146. www.auditorionacional.mcu.es. ✆ **91-337-01-39** or 91-337-01-34. Box office ✆ 91-337-03-07. Tickets 8€–125€. Metro: Cruz del Rayo or Prosperidad.

El Teatro Auditorio del Parque de Atracciones The schedule of this 3,500-seat facility might include everything from punk-rock musical groups to the more highbrow warm-weather performances of visiting symphony orchestras. Check with Localidades Galicia (p. 122) to see what's on at the time of your visit. Casa de Campo. www.parquedeatracciones.es. Metro: Batán.

Fundación Juan March Tapping into funds bequeathed to it by a generous financier (Sr. Juan March), it stages free concerts of Spanish and international classical music within a concert hall at its headquarters. In most cases, 90-minute events are presented every Monday and Saturday at noon, and every Wednesday at 7:30pm. The advance schedule is difficult to predict, so call or visit the website for information. Calle Castelló 77. www.march.es. ✆ **91-435-42-40.** Metro: Núñez de Balboa.

Teatro Fernán Gómez Centro de Arte Among the year-round programs at this cultural center are summer presentations of Spanish-style ballet, along with *zarzuelas* (operettas), orchestral works, and theater pieces. Tickets go on

The Teatro Real.

sale 5 days before the event, and performances are usually presented at two evening shows (7 and 10:30pm). Plaza de Colón. www.teatrofernangomez.esmadrid.com. ✆ **91-480-03-00.** Tickets, depending on event, 10€–35€. Metro: Serrano or Colón.

Teatro Real ★★ This theater is one of the world's finest acoustic settings for opera. Its extensive, state-of-the-art equipment affords elaborate stage designs and special effects. Today the building is the home of Compañía del Teatro Real, a company specializing in opera, and is a major venue for classical music. On November 19, 1850, under the reign of Queen Isabel II, the Royal Opera House opened its doors with Donizetti's *La Favorita.* Plaza Isabel II. www.teatro-real.es. ✆ **91-516-06-60.** Tickets 8€–294€. Metro: Ópera.

THEATER

Madrid offers many different theater performances, useful to you only if you're very fluent in Spanish. If not, check the *Guía del Ocio* for performances by English-speaking companies on tour from Britain, or select a concert or subtitled movie instead.

Teatro de la Zarzuela Near Plaza de la Cibeles, this theater of potent nostalgia produces ballet and an occasional opera in addition to *zarzuelas.* Showtimes vary. The box office is open daily from noon to 5pm (until 8pm on show days). Jovellanos 4. http://teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es. ✆ **91-524-54-00.** Tickets 12€–240€. Metro: Sevilla or Banco de España.

Teatro Español This company is funded by Madrid's municipal government, its repertoire a time-tested assortment of great and/or favorite Spanish plays. The box office is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:30am to 1:30pm and from 5pm until the show's opening. Príncipe 25. www.teatroespanol.es. ✆ **90-210-12-12.** Tickets 4€–26€; 25% discount Wed. Metro: Sevilla or Antón Martín.

Teätro Häagen-Dazs Calderón This is the largest theater in Madrid, with a seating capacity of 2,000. In the past this venue included everything from dramatic theater to flamenco, but in recent years it has taken a more serious turn by presenting mostly opera, with performances beginning most evenings at 8pm.

Calle Atocha 18. www.teatrohaagen-dazs.es. ✆ **90-200-66-17.** Tickets 5€–50€. Metro: Tirso de Molina or Sol.

Teatro Nuevo Apolo Nuevo Apolo is the permanent home of the renowned Antología de la Zarzuela company. It is on the restored site of the old Teatro Apolo, where these musical variety shows have been performed since the 1930s. Prices and times depend on the show. The box office is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:30am to 1:30pm and from 5pm until show time. Plaza de Tirso de Molina 1. ✆ **91-369-06-37.** Tickets usually 15€–60€. Metro: Tirso de Molina.

JAZZ & CABARET

Café Central Off the Plaza de Santa Ana beside the famed Gran Hotel Victoria, the Café Central has a vaguely early-20th-century Art Deco interior, with an unusual series of stained-glass windows. Many customers read newspapers and talk at the marble-top tables during the day, but the ambience is far more animated during the nightly jazz sessions, which are among the best in Spain, and often draw top artists. Open Sunday through Thursday from 1:30pm to 2:30am, Friday and Saturday from 1:30pm to 3:30am; live jazz is offered daily 10pm to midnight. Beer costs 1.80€ to 2.25€. Plaza del Ángel 10. www.cafecentralmadrid.com. ✆ **91-369-41-43.** Cover 9€–18€, depending on the show. Metro: Antón Martín or Puerta del Sol.

Café Jazz Populart ★ This club is known for its exciting jazz groups, which encourage the audience to dance. It specializes in Brazilian, Afro-bass, reggae, and new-wave African music. When the music starts, usually around 11pm, drink prices nearly double. Open Monday to Thursday 6pm to 2:30am, Friday to Saturday 6pm to 3:30am. After the music begins, beer costs 4.50€ to 6€, whiskey with soda 7€ to 12€. Calle Huertas 22. www.populart.es. ✆ **91-429-84-07.** No cover charge. Metro: Antón Martín or Sevilla. Bus: 6 or 60.

Clamores ★ With dozens of small tables and a huge bar in its dark and smoky interior, Clamores, or "Noises," is the largest and one of the most popular jazz clubs in Madrid. Established in the early 1980s, it has thrived because of the diverse roster of American and Spanish jazz bands that have appeared here. Open daily from 6:30pm to around 3am, plus Friday and holiday evenings from 6:30pm until 4am. Daily performances are around 10pm. There are jam sessions Friday and Saturday night from 12:30 to 2:30am. Drinks start at around 5€ each. Albuquerque 14. www.salaclamores.com. ✆ **91-445-79-38.** Cover Tues–Sat usually 8€–30€, but varies with act. Metro: Bilbao.

FLAMENCO

Café de Chinitas ★ Among the best of the traditional flamenco nightclubs in Madrid, Café de Chinitas is set one floor above street level, in a 19th-century building midway between the Opera and Gran Vía. It features an array of Gypsy flamenco artists from Madrid, Barcelona, and Andalucía, with acts changing about once a month. You can arrange for dinner before the show, although many Madrileños opt for dinner elsewhere and then arrive for drinks and the flamenco. Open Monday through Saturday, with dinner served from 8:30pm to 2am and shows at 8 and 10:30pm. Reservations are recommended. Torija 7. www.chinitas.com. ✆ **91-547-15-02.** Dinner and show 65€; cover for show without dinner (but including 1 drink) 35€. Metro: Santo Domingo. Bus: 25 or 29.

LIVING THE flamenco LIFE

Like Spain itself, flamenco is the product of many traditions. The music, dance, and singing style of flamenco stretches back hundreds of years to as far away as the Arabian Peninsula and northern India, but flamenco as we know it finally coalesced in Andalucía in the early 19th century. It is traditionally the art form of the Andalucían poor, many of whom are of Gypsy descent. As such, flamenco was suppressed under Franco, driving many of the great artists into exile.

Notoriously difficult to chart in standard musical and choreographical notation, flamenco is handed down master to student. The art form has four components: guitar, a formalized but mournful style of singing, flamenco dance, and percussion (usually a combination of dance rhythms, complex hand claps [*compas*], and sometimes a *cajón* [wooden drum]).

Flamenco survived the Franco years as folkloric tourist shows, but the art form blossomed after the dictator's death. The emergence of guitar maestro Paco de Lucía and Gypsy singer Camerón de la Isla in the early 1980s galvanized the scene, and their styles remain the benchmark of the flamenco revival.

Today flamenco and its modern variants form the soundtrack of Spain. There are several ways to experience it. *Tablaos* are nightclubs that produce scripted revues geared to a tourist clientele. Aficionados scoff at the lack of spontaneity, but these shows expose you to many musicians and dancers. Most try to sell you dinner before the show. Eat elsewhere and pay the lower admission charge.

The best way to experience flamenco is at a *peña,* a club of flamenco aficionados. Most *peñas* only admit members, but some have an occasional public night. Public flamenco nightclubs like Madrid's famous Casa Patas (p. 127) are the next best alternative. The least expensive and most informal flamenco takes place in bars and taverns, where small troupes often perform around midnight.

Each region of Andalucía has a signature flamenco, but there are three traditional *palos,* or forms. The *soleá* is a slow, mournful style with haunting vocals, spare guitar, and restrained but emotive dancing. The *alegría,* as the name "joy" suggests, is brighter and characterized by complex guitar solos, shifting rhythms, and intricate dancing. Most flamenco performances end with a *bulería,* a double-time exuberant style native to Jerez. When several dancers perform, it sounds like rhythmic thunder.

Cardamomo ★ 🎁 If you want to hear authentic flamenco away from the tourist crowds, head to this little dive. It's a no-frills flamenco club attracting aficionados, many of whom are young working-class Madrileños with a sense of great style. Acts feature young, rising flamenco artists. Open daily 10pm to 3am. Calle Echegaray 15. www.cardamomo.es. ☎ **91-369-07-57.** Reservations required. Cover 32€–43€. Metro: Sol or Sevilla.

Casa Patas This club is one of the best places to see "true" flamenco, as opposed to the more touristy version presented at Corral de la Morería (see below). It is also a bar and restaurant, with space reserved in the rear for flamenco. Shows are presented at 10:30pm Monday to Thursday, with two shows at 9pm and midnight on Friday and Saturday, and more frequent shows during Madrid's major fiesta month of May. The best flamenco in Madrid is found here. Proof of the pudding is that flamenco singers and dancers often hang out here after hours. Tapas—priced at 4€ to 18€—are available at the bar. Open Monday to Saturday from 8pm to 2:30am. Calle Cañizares 10. www.casapatas.com. ☎ **91-369-04-96.** Cover 19€–40€. Metro: Tirso de Molina or Antón Martín.

Corral de la Morería In the Old Town, the Morería ("where the Moors reside") sizzles with flamenco, but the crowd is definitely tourists. Colorfully costumed strolling performers warm up the audience around 10pm; a flamenco show follows, with at least 10 dancers. It's much cheaper to eat elsewhere first, and then pay only the one-drink minimum. Open daily 8:30pm to 2:30am. Morería 17. www.corraldelamoreria.com. ☎ **91-365-84-46.** Cover 1-drink minimum 38€; 43€–142€ with dinner. Metro: La Latina or Ópera.

Las Tablas ★ 🎁 Fed up with faux flamenco on the tourist circuit and all those frilly costumes, dancers Antonia Moya and Marisol Navarro opened their own little place. In a minimalist room, they perform some of the most authentic flamenco in Madrid. Sometimes the owners star in a show. This place is for flamenco devotees. From Sunday to Thursday there is one show at 10pm; on Friday and Saturday there are two shows, at 8 and 10pm, and reservations are necessary on weekends. Plaza de España 9. www.lastablasmadrid.com. ☎ **91-542-05-20.** Cover 25€, including 1st drink. Metro: Plaza de España.

Spectator Sports

FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

Real Madrid Named the "best team of the 20th century" by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Real Madrid commands the fervid loyalty of most Madrileños, and tickets for home matches (60€–140€) sell out quickly. If your heart is set on it, "go to the stadium, stand in line, and pray," we've been told. The matches are also broadcast on premium TV channels, and every bar and most restaurants seem to subscribe. When Real Madrid is playing away, the best bar is **Real Cafe Bernabéu,** located at Entrance 30 at the stadium. The tapas and sandwiches are first rate and the drinks are reasonable.

Estadio Santiago Bernabéu, Paseo de la Castellana 144/Concha Espina 1. www.realmadrid.com. ☎ **91-398-44-00;** tickets ☎ 90-224-48-24. Metro: Bernabéu.

Atlético de Madrid Nowhere near as big a deal as Real Madrid, the Atléticos are the underdogs of Madrid football. They are nonetheless highly skilled professionals, and you can usually get tickets (20€–100€) to their home matches—unless they are playing Real Madrid.

Estadio Vicente Calderón, Paseo de la Virgen del Puerto, 67. www.clubatleticodemadrid.com. ☎ **91-366-47-07.** Metro: Pirámides.

The Comeback of the *Heladería*

Ice-cream parlors *(heladerías)* have made a big comeback in Madrid, and many local young people like to hang out at these gathering places at night—not just for ice cream, since tapas and cocktails are sold as well. The most fashionable of the new *heladerías* is **Giangrossi,** Calle Alberto Aguilera 1 (www.giangrossi.es; ✆ **91-444-01-30;** Metro: San Bernardo). The comfortable sofas and armchairs are made of fur, and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. This *heladería* specializes in what it calls "artisanal ice creams," which are made on-site in at least 40 different flavors divided among creams, chocolates, and fruits. Their shakes and sundaes are the best in town. Hours at this shop and the branch below are daily 8am to 1am. Ice cream begins at 3€ per serving. The other in-town branch is in Salamanca at Velázquez 44 (Metro: Velázquez).

Dance & Music Clubs

The Spanish dance club takes its inspiration from those of other Western capitals. In Madrid, most clubs are open from around 6 to 9pm, and then later reopen around 11pm. They generally start rocking at about midnight.

Café La Palma Live Cuban groups playing salsa dominate the agenda here. As in Paris, anything Cuban is chic in Madrid. This convivial club is one of the most happening in the capital. It's open daily from 4pm to 3am, but go after 10pm for the most action. A group made up of people mainly in their 20s and 30s is attracted here by the live music Tuesday to Sunday nights. A DJ plays on Sunday. La Palma 62. www.cafelapalma.com. ✆ **91-522-50-31.** Cover 8€–22€. Metro: Noviciado.

Cool With its loud colors and omnipresent beautiful mirrors, Cool is an ironic journey back to the cultural stereotypes of the 1970s. Some of the city's most successful female impersonators perform here to the delight of patrons who like gender variety in their bawdy entertainment. A youthful crowd patronizes the joint, including a lot of visiting Brits and Yankees. The ambisexual vibe means you could meet your match on the dance floor, whoever she or he might be. Open only on Friday and Saturday midnight to 6am. Isabela la Católica 6. ✆ **90-249-99-94.** Cover 15€. Metro: Santo Domingo.

Kapital This is the most sprawling, labyrinthine, and multicultural disco in Madrid. Set within what was originally a theater, it contains seven different levels, each sporting at least one bar and an ambience that's often radically different from that of the previous floor. Voyeurs of every age have a great time at Kapital because there's a lot to watch in the mixed crowd that pursues whatever form of sexuality seems appropriate at the moment. Open Thursday to Sunday midnight to 6am. Second drinks from 10€ each. Atocha 125. www.grupo-kapital.com. ✆ **91-420-29-06.** Cover 12€–20€, including 1st drink. Metro: Atocha.

Nasti The name of this indie-music venue is rather apt, attracting the grimy hipsters of Madrid to its precincts for avant-garde musical acts by both homegrown and foreign bands, even those from the States. Garage bands to punk rockers appear before stoned audiences, mostly under 35. This underground dive is a slice of young Madrid. Open Wednesday to Saturday 11pm to 5am. Vicente Ferrer 33. www.nasti.es. ✆ **91-521-76-05.** Cover 10€. Metro: Tribunal.

Pachá This late-night club, attracting the 20-to-40 age group, has long been a fixture on the Madrid nightlife scene. In the 1930s, it was a movie theater, but by the 1980s it had become a "dance cathedral." As the night grows late, milling crowds pack the precincts, and the noise level becomes deafening. Dancing to loud music and hard drinking rule the night. Open Wednesday to Sunday 11pm to 6am. Barceló 11. www.pacha-madrid.com. ✆ **91-447-01-28.** Cover 15€–20€, including 1st drink. Metro: Tribunal.

Siroco This rocking rock club heats up on weekends, offering some hot live bands plus what some patrons call the best DJs in town, young men who spin everything from hip-hop to Elvis. You need to be 18 to get in, but if you're over 30 head elsewhere; this would not be your scene. The cellar, not the main floor, is the scene of most of the action. Open daily from 10:30pm to 5am. San Dimas 3. www.siroco.es. ✆ **91-593-30-70.** Cover 5€–10€. Metro: San Bernardo.

Pubs & Bars

Bar Cock This two-floor bar attracts some of the most visible artists, actors, models, and filmmakers in Madrid. The name comes from the word *cocktail,* or so they say. The decoration is elaborate and unique, in contrast to the hip, minimalist clientele, and the martinis are Madrid's best. Open Sunday to Thursday 7pm to 3am, and Friday and Saturday 7pm to 4am. It's closed December 24 to 31. Drinks are 5.50€ to 10€. Calle De la Reina 16. www.barcock.com. ✆ **91-532-28-26.** Metro: Gran Vía.

Del Diego This is the pleasant spot to chill out with a dry martini or a margarita, even if the classic decor and old-school cocktail list do evoke tired memories of Tom Cruise in the movie *Cocktail.* Don't expect contemporary drinks; the guys behind the bar are not exactly mixologists, let alone modern-day alchemists.

Summer *Terrazas*

At the first blush of spring weather, Madrileños rush outdoors to drink, talk, and sit at open-air cafes, called *terrazas,* throughout the city. The best and most expensive ones are along Paseo de la Castellana between Plaza de la Cibeles and Plaza Emilio Castelar, but there are dozens more throughout the city.

You can wander up and down the boulevard, selecting one that appeals to you; if you get bored, move on to another one. You'll find them along other *paseos,* including the Recoletos and the Prado; both are fashionable areas but not as hip as the Castellana. For traditional atmosphere, the terraces at Plaza Mayor win out. Plaza Santa Ana has several atmospheric choices within the Old City. Friday and Saturday are the most popular nights for drinking; many locals sit here all night. Although many *terrazas* have been around for decades, two newer ones are attracting the fashionable. The most stylish of these is the one at **Hotel Urban,** Carrera San Jerónimo 34 (www.hotelurban.com; ✆ **91-787-77-70**). Its deck is filled with white-leather seats, and it opens onto the Gran Vía, Madrid's main street. Another stylish terraza is found by riding the elevator to the top of the avant-garde **Hotel Silken Puerta América Madrid,** Av. de América 41 (www.hoteles-silken.com; ✆ **91-744-54-00**). Here the Bar Skynight features bossa nova beats and the town's best martinis, or so the bartender claims.

Del Diego is a family-owned operation that caters to an older, sedate clientele. In a quiet street off Gran Vía, the bar is open Monday to Saturday from 7pm to 3:30am (closed Aug). Cocktails start at 6€. Reina 12. ✆ **91-522-75-44.** Metro: Gran Vía.

Glass Bar ★ In the much-recommended **Hotel Urban** (p. 134), the Glass Bar is the hottest rendezvous spot in Madrid. No other place in town makes such a dramatic use of the hotel's silica-based namesake, which is featured in everything from tables to chandeliers. The *très* cosmopolitan bar and cocktail lounge does the town's best mojitos. Open daily 11am to 3am. Carrera de San Jerónimo 34. ✆ **91-787-77-70.** Metro: Sevilla.

La Venencia On one of the traditional *tasca* streets in Old Madrid, this tavern has a distinctive personality. It is solely dedicated to the art of serving Spain's finest sherry. (Don't come in here asking for an extra dry martini.) The best in the house is the amontillado, bold and warming. To go with all that sherry, the waiters serve tapas, especially those garlicky marinated olives, *mojama* (cured tuna), and Cabrales blue-cheese canapés. Barrels form the decor, along with antique posters long turned tobacco-gold from all the cigarette smoke back in the day. Open daily 1 to 3:30pm and 7:30pm to 1:30am (Fri–Sat to 2am). Calle Echegaray 7. ✆ **91-429-73-13.** Metro: Sevilla.

The LGBT Scene

Black & White This is Madrid's major gay bar (with a mixed crowd on weekends), located in the center of the Chueca district. A guard will open the door to a large room—painted, as you might expect, black and white. There's a disco in the basement, but the street-level bar is the premier gathering spot, featuring drag shows (beginning at 12:30am Sun–Fri), male striptease, and videos. Old movies are shown against one wall. Open Monday to Thursday 10pm to 5am, Friday to Saturday 10pm to 6am. Beer is 6€; whiskey costs 8€. Libertad 34 at the corner of Gravina. www.discoblack-white.net. ✆ **91-531-11-41.** Metro: Chueca.

Cruising One of the landmark gay bars of Madrid, a center for raising gay consciousness and for gay cruising, this place has probably been visited at least once by every gay male in Castilla. There are virtually no women inside, but always a hustler looking for a tourist john. It doesn't get crowded or lively until late at night. Open daily from 8pm to 3:30am. Beer costs from 2.50€; whiskey, 7€. Pérez Galdos 5. ✆ **91-521-51-43.** Metro: Chueca or Gran Vía.

Casinos

Casino Gran Madrid (www.casinogranmadrid.es; ✆ **91-856-11-00** or 90-090-08-10) is at Km 29 along Carretera La Coruña (the A-6 highway running btw. Madrid and A Coruña). The largest casino in Madrid, it appeals to nongamblers with a roster of dining and entertainment facilities, including two restaurants, four bars, and a nightclub. And if you happen to enjoy gambling, there are facilities for French and American roulette, blackjack, punto y banco, baccarat, and chemin de fer. Presentation of a passport at the door is essential—without it, you won't be admitted. Entrance costs 3€, although that fee is often waived for residents of some of Madrid's larger hotels who arrive with a ticket provided gratis by the hotel's management. The casino and most of its facilities are open daily from 4pm to 5am (until 6am Fri–Sat).

An a la carte restaurant in the French Gaming Room offers international cuisine, with dinners costing from 50€. A buffet in the American Gaming Room costs 25€ to 32€. There is also a '50s New York–style restaurant, Mandalay, which offers a 65€ menu. The restaurants are open daily from 9pm to 2am. The casino is about 29km (18 miles) northwest of Madrid. Buses depart for the casino from Plaza de España 6 every afternoon and evening at 4:30, 6, 7:30, 9:30, and 11pm, and 12:45am. Note that between October 14 and May 14, men must wear jackets; T-shirts and tennis shoes are forbidden in any season. To enter, European visitors must present an identity card; non-European visitors must present a passport.

WHERE TO STAY

The economic straits facing Spain over the last few years have proven to be a boon for travelers, as day-to-day hotel prices in Madrid have declined, even though the official national ratings book permits them to charge far more. More than 50,000 rooms blanket the city, from grand bedchambers fit for princes and rock stars to serviceable but sparse bedrooms in some neighborhood *hostales* and *pensiones* (technically, more boardinghouses than hotels). The majority of our recommendations here are for modern hotels, although many travelers still yearn for the old-fashioned comforts of the Ritz and the Westin Palace, built from 1910 to 1912.

Telephones

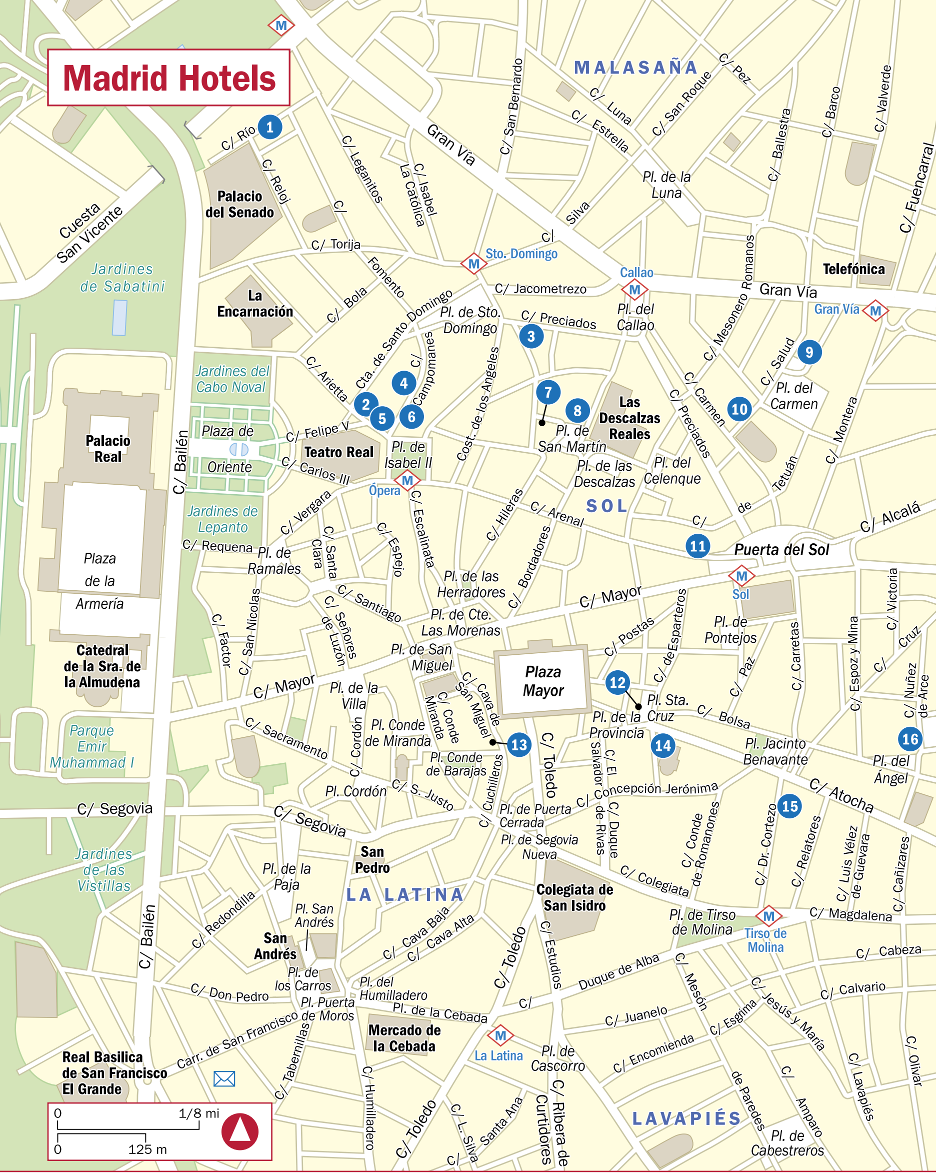
The telephone area code for Madrid is **91** if you're calling from within Spain. If you're calling from the United States, dial **011,** the country code (34), Madrid's city code (91), and then the local number.

We often frequent some of the hotels near Atocha railway station and the Ópera Metro stop, and we have tried to select some of the best in these neighborhoods. While potentially noisier, they are also ideally located for sightseeing and nightlife. But many of the most comfortable modern establishments have been constructed on upscale residential streets jutting from the Paseo de la Castellana.

Keep in mind that wherever you decide to alight, you will probably have to carry your own luggage, and may find even expensive rooms to be far smaller than you would find in North America. When asking for a price quote, be sure to ask if it includes the IVA tax of 8%. Many lodgings include a continental breakfast in the price; if not, you can often save a bundle by eating at a nearby coffee shop or bakery.

PARKING This is a serious problem because so few hotels have garages; many buildings turned into hotels were constructed before the invention of the automobile. Street parking is rarely available, and even if it is, you run the risk of having your car broken into. If you're driving into Madrid, most hotels (and most police) will allow you to park in front of the hotel long enough to unload your luggage. Someone on the staff can usually pinpoint the location of the nearest garage in the neighborhood, often giving you a map showing the way. Parking charges given in most hotel listings are the prices these neighborhood garages charge for an average-size vehicle. You won't need a car for your time in Madrid. If you're moving on to explore the countryside, pick up your rental when you're ready to set out.

Madrid Hotels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Jardines del Cabo Noval
Plaza de Oriente
Jardines de Lepanto
Teatro Real
Parque Emir Muhammad I
Jardines de las Vistillas
Real Basilica de San Francisco El Grande
San Pedro
San Andrés
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Colegiata de San Isidro
Plaza Mayor
Las Descalzas Reales
Telefónica
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C/ Bailén
C/ Fuencarral
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Casa de Madrid	5
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Hotel Cortezo	15
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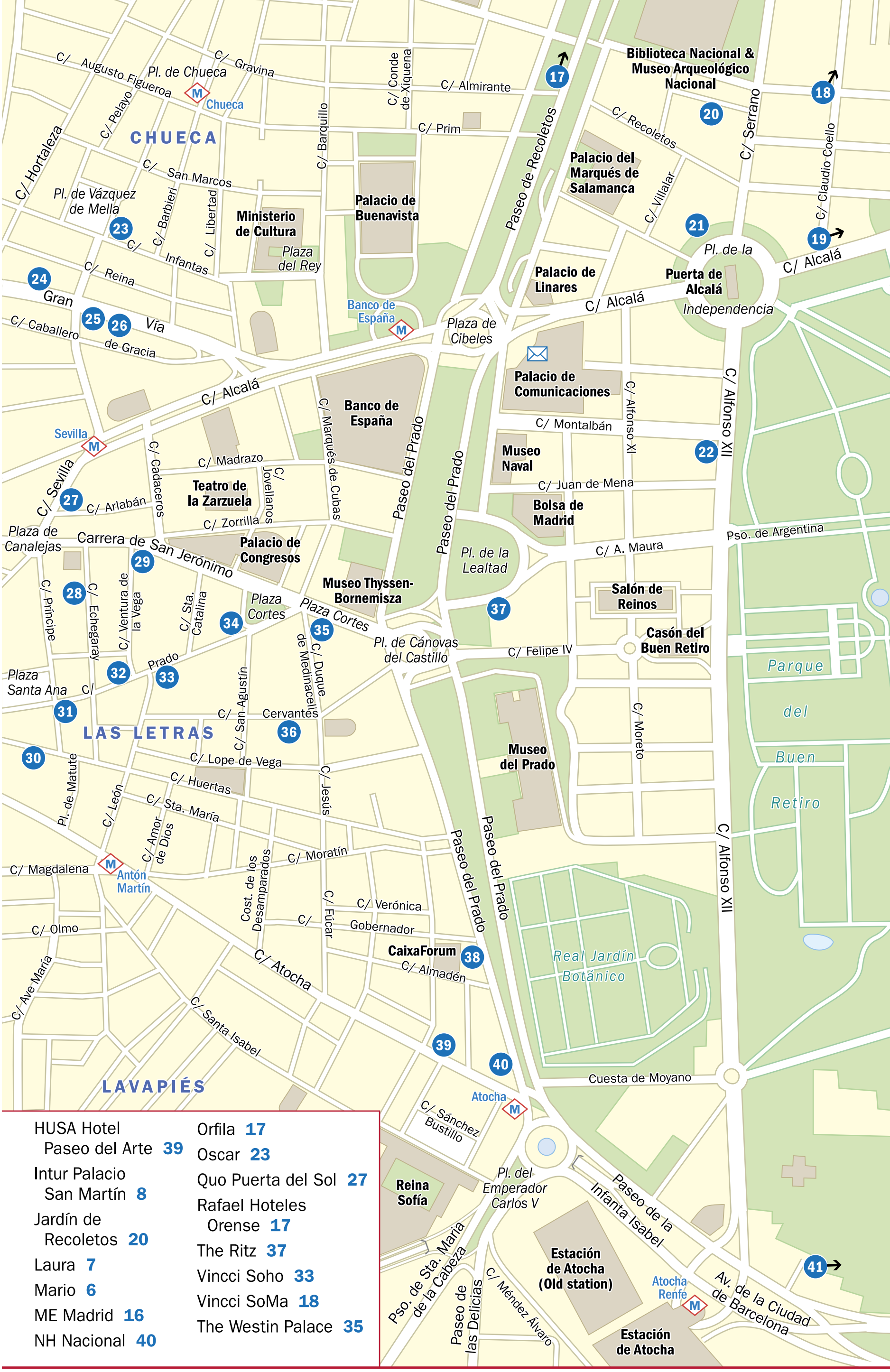
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C/ Madrazo
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C/ Jovellanos
C/ Zorrilla
C/ Marqués de Cubas
Banco de España
Paseo del Prado
Museo Naval
C/ Juan de Mena
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C/ A. Maura
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C/ Echegaray
C/ Ventura de la Vega
C/ Sta. Catalina
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Plaza Cortes
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Casón del Buen Retiro
C/ Felipe IV
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Plaza Santa Ana
C/ Prado
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C/ Duque de Medinaceli
C/ Cervantes
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C/ Lope de Vega
C/ Huertas
C/ Sta. María
C/ Jesús
Museo del Prado
C/ Moreto
Pl. de Matute
C/ León
C/ Amor de Dios
C/ Magdalena
M Antón Martín
Cost. de los Desamparados
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LAVAPIÉS
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Reina Sofía
Pl. del Emperador Carlos V
Paseo de la Infanta Isabel
Pso. de Sta. María de la Cabeza
Paseo de las Delicias
C/ Méndez Álvaro
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Puerta del Sol & Las Letras

EXPENSIVE

Hotel Urban ★★ With a postage-stamp swimming pool open to the sky, a moonlit restaurant, and a spectacular patio, Urban is the latest in city chic. The lobby evokes an office-building atrium, but its grace notes are the towering sculptures from Papua, New Guinea, that are found along one wall. Rooms are luxurious and modern with dark-wood furnishings and lots of dark leather. Soundproof windows block off traffic noise. At night, elegant Madrileños flood the sleek **Restaurante Europa Deco** (p. 97) to savor its Mediterranean fusion cuisine. Just below the lobby is a Museum of Egyptian Art with sculptures from the heyday of the pharaohs.

Carrera de San Jerónimo, 28014 Madrid. www.derbyhotels.com/Urban-Hotel-Madrid. ✆ **91-787-77-70.** Fax 91-787-77-99. 96 units. 190€–470€ double; 275€–645€ junior suite; from 305€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Sevilla. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (90€); exercise room; outdoor heated pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (20€ per 24 hr.).

ME Madrid ★ This landmark hotel began as private palace in 1923, and its ornate stone facade is protected by National Heritage (a governmental organization). History ends when you walk in the door, as the interior design is self-consciously hip. Most of the contemporary, well-maintained, and comfortable bedrooms are small to midsize, although some are spacious. You can stay in a standard double, a self-contained studio, or a suite (among the most glamorous in Madrid). Ernest Hemingway preferred to lodge in the Tower Suite, but Papa wouldn't recognize the old Reina Victoria in its iPad makeover.

Plaza de Santa Ana 14, 28012 Madrid. www.memadrid.com. ✆ **91-701-60-00.** Fax 91-522-03-07. 191 units. 199€–260€ standard double; 354€–415€ studio; from 510€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Metro: Tirso de Molina or Sol. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Vincci Soho ★ Five traditional town houses were combined to form this chic hotel, which is stylish and minimalist yet exceedingly comfortable with its sleek avant-garde design. In the Huertas district, the hotel lies near the Prado. Rooms in the rear are not dark because they open onto a spacious courtyard. The decorator often used whimsical touches, including butterfly cutouts on the restaurant walls, to give the hotel a bright, airy feeling. Some 140 of the rooms are standard doubles, the rest being executive units (each with a balcony). The breakfast buffet is one of the best in the area, noted for its international cuisine with a Mediterranean touch.

Calle Prado 18, 28014 Madrid. www.vinccihoteles.com. ✆ **91-141-41-00.** Fax 91-141-41-01. 169 units. 136€–320€ double. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking: 27€. Metro: Retiro. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Alicia ★ 🏷 The concept of the Room Mate hotel chain is that you're crashing at a friend's home in a trendy section of Madrid. Other "roommates" in Madrid include Oscar (p. 140), Mario (p. 139), and Laura (p. 139). Alicia is chic yet affordable, based on the designs of Pascua Ortega, one of Spain's top decorators. It lies at the corner of the bustling Plaza de Santa Ana, close to the Prado, Reina

Sofía, and Thyssen-Bornemisza museums. The small to midsize bedrooms have a loft aesthetic of open, flexible spaces, and many units overlooking the square have floor-to-ceiling windows. The minimalist decor and lack of some hotel services may be a drawback to certain guests, but affordable rates make this hotel a standout in pricey Madrid.

Calle del Prado 2, 28014 Madrid. www.room-matehotels.com. ✆ **91-389-60-95.** Fax 91-369-47-95. 34 units. 90€–110€ double; 134€–153€ junior suite; from 251€ duplex. Rates include breakfast until noon. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Metro: Sol. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

All Seasons Madrid Prado You might get the feeling this hotel is overbooked and understaffed, but it has comfortable rooms, relatively reasonable rates, and a well-scrubbed interior less than a decade old. You'll register in a somewhat claustrophobic lobby and then head upstairs to a cozy room sleekly outfitted with contemporary-looking, full-grained walls and partitions. Other than breakfast, no meals are served.

Calle Prado 11, 28014 Madrid. www.pradohotel.com. ✆ **91-369-02-34.** Fax 91-429-28-29. 48 units. 90€–125€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Antón Martín. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Inglés ★ You'll find this little hotel (where Virginia Woolf used to stay) on a central street lined with *tascas.* Behind the redbrick facade is a modern, impersonal hotel with contemporary, well-maintained rooms. The lobby is air-conditioned, but guest rooms are not; those who open their windows at night are likely to hear noise from the enclosed courtyard, so light sleepers beware. Units come in a variety of shapes, most of them small; some in the back are quite dark.

Calle Echegaray 8, 28014 Madrid. www.hotel-ingles.net. ✆ **91-429-65-51.** Fax 91-420-24-23. 58 units. 125€ double; 135€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Metro: Sol or Sevilla. **Amenities:** Bar; concierge. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Moderno ★★ 🏷 The building dates from 1857 and the hotel opened in 1939 as part of the rebuilding of Puerta del Sol after the destruction of the Civil War. It's been in the family ever since; they love the place and it shows. As with all older buildings, it has some quirks. Rooms are small because the original support beams limit expansions, but ask for a room on floors five to seven, which are about 10% larger. They are also quieter. Marble and tile bathrooms are especially nice, and 17 doubles have outdoor patios. Exterior rooms look out on the pedestrian street of Arenal or on the main entrance to El Corte Inglés. One especially nice touch we haven't found elsewhere: The sheets and towels smell very fresh because the hotel does its own laundry and dries them in the sun on the roof.

Arenal 2, 28014 Madrid. www.hotel-moderno.com. ✆ **91-531-09-00.** 97 rooms. 80€–125€ double; 90€–120€ triple. Metro: Sol. **Amenities:** Bar, concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Quo Puerta del Sol ★ 🎁 One of Spain's most famous interior decorators played a large part in transforming this early-20th-century building into a first-rate hotel with a sleek interior of modern design, one of the best of its type in Madrid. The location is very convenient, lying between Plaza Santa Ana and Puerta del Sol. If you stay here, you'll be surrounded by some of the best restaurants and shopping in Madrid. Try for one of the top-floor rooms, each with a private patio overlooking Calle Mayor. The traditional facade conceals the high-tech amenities of the interior. An informed and efficient staff always seems ready to deal with your requests. Bedrooms are medium in size and furnished with contemporary pieces that offer both style and comfort.

Calle de Sevilla 4, 28014 Madrid. www.quopuertadelsolhotel.com. ✆ **91-532-90-49.** Fax 91-531-28-34. 61 units. 108€–196€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Sol. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (30€); babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Chic & Basic Colors ★ 🏷 A short walk from the Atocha station, the chic and basic philosophy here is no frills and no ostentation, but exquisite taste and a fun ambience. The six-floor *hostal* attracts a gay clientele, although many straights check in, too. The hotel is divided into zones—"be yourself," where you can let your hair down; "help yourself," with free coffee and munchies; and "love yourself," where you'll find a sun terrace, chaise longues, and a shower to freshen up. Guests can adjust the intensity of light in their bedrooms to fit their moods. A "wake-up kit" is left at your modern bedroom door with a "tasty morsel" to launch your day.

Calle Atocha 113, 28012 Madrid. www.chicandbasic.com. ✆ **91-369-28-95.** Fax 91-420-08-40. 10 units. 60€–110€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Metro: Tirso de Molina. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; cafeteria; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hostal Cervantes 🏷 One of Madrid's most pleasant family-run hotels, the Cervantes is much appreciated by our readers, and has been for years. You'll take a tiny bird cage–style elevator to the immaculately maintained second floor of this stone-and-brick building. Each guest room contains a comfortable bed and spartan furniture. No breakfast is served, but the owners, the Alfonsos, will direct you to a nearby cafe. The establishment is convenient to the Prado, Parque del Retiro, and the older sections of Madrid.

Cervantes 34, 28014 Madrid. www.hostal-cervantes.com. ✆ **91-429-83-65.** Fax 91-429-27-45. 20 units. 50€–70€ double; 70€–80€ apt. MC, V. Metro: Antón Martín. *In room:* Ceiling fan, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Cortezo Just off Calle de Atocha, which leads to the railroad station of the same name, the Cortezo is a short walk from Plaza Mayor and Puerta del Sol. Although it has been renovated many times since, it still has a lingering aura of the 1950s, when it was built. The guest rooms are comfortable but simply furnished, with up-to-date plumbing. Beds are springy and the furniture is pleasantly modern; many rooms have sitting areas with desk and armchair. The public rooms match the guest rooms in freshness.

Doctor Cortezo 3, 28012 Madrid. www.mediumhoteles.com. ✆ **91-369-01-01.** Fax 91-369-37-74. 85 units. 55€–136€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 23€. Metro: Sol, Tirso de Molina. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Plaza Mayor & La Latina

Hostal la Macarena ★ 🏷 Known for its reasonable prices and praised by readers for its warm hospitality, this unpretentious hotel is run by the Ricardo González family. A 19th-century facade with Belle Epoque designs stands in ornate contrast to the chiseled simplicity of the ancient buildings facing it. The location is one of the hotel's assets: It's on a street (a noisy one) immediately behind Plaza Mayor, near one of the best clusters of *tascas* in Madrid. Guest rooms, ranging from small to medium, are all well kept, with modest furnishings and comfortable beds. Windows facing the street have double panes.

Cava de San Miguel 8, 28005 Madrid. www.silserranos.com. ☎ **91-365-92-21.** Fax 91-364-27-57. 20 units. 59€–69€ double; 84€–90€ triple. MC, V. Parking nearby 25€. Metro: Sol, Ópera, or La Latina. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Hostal La Perla Asturiana Ideal for those who want to stay in the heart of Old Madrid (1 block off Plaza Mayor and 2 blocks from Puerta del Sol), this small, family-run place welcomes you with a courteous staff at the desk 24 hours a day for security and convenience. You can socialize in the small, comfortable lobby adjacent to the reception area. Stay here for the cheap prices and location, not for grand comfort. Each of the small guest rooms comes with a comfortable bed. No breakfast is served.

Plaza de Santa Cruz 3, 28012 Madrid. www.perlaasturiana.com. ☎ **91-366-46-00.** Fax 91-366-46-08. 30 units. 58€ double; 78€ triple. MC, V. Nearby parking 25€. Metro: Sol. *In room:* A/C (in some), TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Plaza Mayor ★ 🏷 If you want a hotel in the very heart of historic Old Madrid, there is no better location than this little charmer, right off a famous square. The well-maintained bedrooms are rather large, and handsomely and comfortably furnished in a contemporary idiom. The best place to stay if you can afford the higher price is the Suite del Palomar, filled with luxury and imbued with charm. For the type of comfort offered, the rates are among the most affordable in Old Town. The hotel lies in what used to be the Iglesia de la Santa Cruz, a historic church that fell into disrepair until the building was recycled for another use in the 21st century. The reception staff will recommend their favorite restaurants and *tascas* in the area (if you promise not to reveal their secrets).

Calle Atocha 2, 28012 Madrid. www.h-plazamayor.com. ☎ **91-360-06-06.** Fax 91-360-06-10. 34 units. 65€–120€ double; from 100€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Metro: La Latina. **Amenities:** Cafeteria. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Ópera & Palacio Real

EXPENSIVE

Casa de Madrid ★★ This small boutique hotel-cum-B&B—one of Madrid's most elegant—stands across the street from the Royal Opera. Home of the Friends of Madrid Club, it occupies the second floor of an 18th-century mansion. Each bedroom is exquisitely decorated with antiques, including Persian rugs, and each of the accommodations has a different theme. The simplest chamber is called the Japan room (a tight double). Among the most elegant units are the Leaves of April, the Syria Mediterranean Room, the Royal India Room, and the Lavender Blue Room; the grandest is the Damascus Suite. Surely you'll agree that breakfast always tastes better when served on silver trays. The house is filled with valuable objets d'art.

Calle Arrieta 2, 28013 Madrid. www.casademadrid.com. ☎ **91-559-57-91.** Fax 91-540-11-00. 7 units. 99€–285€ double; 793€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, MC, V. Nearby parking 18€. Metro: Ópera. **Amenities:** Airport transfers (55€; free with 3 or more nights). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Casón del Tormes This attractive hotel is around the corner from the Palacio Royal and Plaza de España. Behind a four-story redbrick facade with stone-trimmed windows, it overlooks a quiet one-way street. A long, narrow lobby floored with marble opens onto a public room. Guest rooms are generally spacious and comfortable, with color-coordinated fabrics and dark wood, including mahogany headboards. Motorists appreciate the public parking lot near the hotel.

Calle del Río 7, 28013 Madrid. www.hotelcasondeltormes.com. ✆ **91-541-97-46.** Fax 91-541-18-52. 63 units. 103€–135€ double; 142€–156€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 24€. Metro: Plaza de España. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (5€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Meninas ★ 🏷 In the very center of Madrid, this little hotel was created out of a 19th-century building that was transformed into one of the better bargains in the area. During the restoration, many amenities were added, such as soundproof rooms—a good thing since the hotel lies in the center of a traffic-clogged area. The structure may be antique, but not the improvements, which range from a smoke-detector system to Wi-Fi access. The bedrooms come in a range of sizes and styles, from singles to suites, and even some triples. The little hotel offers a buffet breakfast in a vaulted dining room that also has a welcoming bar with lounge.

Calle Campomanes 7, 28013 Madrid. www.hotelmeninas.com. ✆ **91-541-28-05.** Fax 91-541-28-06. 37 units. 79€–119€ double; from 159€ junior suite. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 30€. Metro: Ópera. **Amenities:** Bar; exercise room; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Ópera ★ The boxy exterior hides the fact that once you're in the door, this lovely boutique hotel near the Teatro Real and Palacio Real is a real find. Try for one of the upper-level rooms with outdoor terraces, glassed-in Jacuzzi tubs, and skylights. The biggest problem with the Hotel Ópera is that between the nice room and room service (along with massage services), you may never get out to see Madrid.

Cuesta de Santo Domingo 2, 28103, Madrid. www.hotelopera.com. ✆ **91-541-28-00.** 79 units. 100€–170€ double. Metro: Ópera. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; gym; personal shopper; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Preciados ★ ☺ One of Madrid's most centrally located hotels was created from a historic 1881 structure. The original facade, entryway, grand staircase, and other architectural details have been retained, but everything else has been reconstructed from scratch for modern comfort. The five-floor hotel, which opened in 2001, is close to such landmarks as the Palacio Royal, the opera house, and Puerta del Sol (the very center of Madrid). Children are especially welcome here; special facilities for them such as extra beds can be added to the standard rooms. There's even a kids' menu in the restaurant. Guest rooms are midsize to spacious.

Preciados 37, 28013 Madrid. www.preciadoshotel.com. ✆ **91-454-44-00.** Fax 91-454-44-01. 73 units. 126€–180€ double; 190€–250€ suite. MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Sol or Santo Domingo/Callao. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (70€); babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Intur Palacio San Martín ★ Formerly the American Embassy, this is now one of the most desirable hotels in the center of Madrid (in the vicinity of Puerta del Sol). Various 19th-century architectural details, such as original moldings, have been maintained, as has the elegant wooden elevator. Constructed in 1883, it lies on a tranquil square within walking distance of such Madrid highlights as the Plaza Mayor and Plaza de Oriente. Slabs of marble, fine woods, and a beautifully crafted ceiling in the lobby remain from its days as an embassy. The midsize guest rooms have been carefully decorated and restored with many modern conveniences. Some of the better units contain Jacuzzi-style tubs.

Plaza San Martín 5, 28013 Madrid. www.intur.com. ✆ **91-701-50-00.** Fax 91-701-50-10. 94 units. 92€–220€ double; from 147€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Ópera. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (25€); babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Mercure Hotel Santo Domingo ★ This formal historically decorated hotel adjacent to the Gran Vía is a 2-minute walk from Plaza de España. It was inaugurated in 1994, and enlarged again 15 years later by grafting together two adjacent structures. The design seeks to evoke the formal trappings of the late 19th century, and the abundant art supports that style. Well soundproofed (essential this close to Gran Vía), the rooms all differ but tend to have gold damask wall coverings, faux tortoiseshell desks, and striped satin bedspreads. The best units are the fifth-floor doubles, especially those with furnished balconies and views over the tile roofs.

Calle San Bernardo 1, 28013 Madrid. http://hotelsantodomingo.es. ✆ **91-547-98-00.** Fax 91-547-59-95. 200 units. 91€–125€ double; 319€–365€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Santo Domingo. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Laura ★ The interior designer for this Room Mate hotel managed to cram a spacious lobby and avant-garde decoration into a narrow, triangular building. Some guests have likened Laura to a modern hotel in New York, and the location is one of the best in town, a 2-minute walk from the heart of Plaza Mayor or a 4-minute walk from the Puerta del Sol (the Times Square of Madrid). Bedrooms are loftlike or else duplexes, each unit beautifully decorated and comfortable, even elegantly furnished, if your tastes are minimalist. We are impressed with the hotel's room amenities and the fact that the maid leaves a fresh apple on the nightstand. Each of the rooms also comes with a minikitchen.

Travesia de Trujillos 3, 28013 Madrid. www.room-matehotels.com. ✆ **91-701-16-70.** Fax 91-521-76-55. 36 units. 80€–102€ double; 104€–120€ suite. Rates include breakfast until noon. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 22€. Metro: Sol. **Amenities:** Babysitting; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, kitchenette, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Mario 🏷 Near the opera house and the Palacio Real, this is one of the most affordable choices in the area, despite its central location. The hotel doesn't have a lot of extras, but if you're seeking a clean, decent, cheap choice in the area, consider this for a night or two. The guest rooms, though small, have modern decor along with well-maintained private bathrooms. The hotel was once a youth hostel, and a bit of that aura remains. The best and most requested room is no. 201, which is more spacious than the others. The reception-desk staff is very helpful, especially when recommending local restaurants and decoding rail timetables.

Calle Campomanes 4, 28013 Madrid. www.room-matehoteles.com. ✆ **91-548-85-48.** Fax 91-559-12-88. 54 units. 60€–77€ double; 99€–112€ suite. Rates include breakfast until noon. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 22€. Metro: Ópera. **Amenities:** Babysitting; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Chueca

Oscar ★ In many ways this is the most modern and stylish of the Room Mate chain hotels sweeping across trendy Madrid. It was the personal statement of Tomás Alía, the famous interior designer, who transformed a bland box into an interior sculptural puzzle. A haven for "fun" furniture, the hotel decorates some of its rooms with erotic wallpaper, others with very futuristic decor, perhaps resembling the inside of a lava lamp. The neighborhood is gay-friendly and the hotel design makes no assumptions about who is sleeping with whom. A wide variety of rooms are offered, from standard to executive doubles, even junior or regular suites. Some units have a balcony opening onto the bustling Plaza Vázquez de Mella.

Plaza Vázquez de Mella 12, 28004 Madrid. www.room-matehotels.com. ✆ **91-701-11-73.** Fax 91-521-87-18. 75 units. 103€–138€ double; 153€–163€ junior suite. Rates include breakfast until noon. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 28€. Metro: Sol. **Amenities:** Babysitting; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Salamanca, Retiro & Chamberí

VERY EXPENSIVE

AC Santo Mauro ★★★ Reflective of its history, this hotel offers both elegance and style. It opened in 1991 in what was once a neoclassical villa built in 1894 for the duke of Santo Mauro. Set within a garden and evocative of French style, it's decorated with rich fabrics and Art Deco accents and furnishings. Staff members outnumber rooms by two to one. Each guest room contains lovely details like raw silk curtains, Persian carpets, antique prints, and parquet floors. Rooms are large and come in combinations ranging from studios to duplex suites.

Calle Zurbano 36, 28010 Madrid. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **91-319-69-00.** Fax 91-308-54-77. 51 units. 250€–380€ double; from 350€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 31€. Metro: Rubén Darío or Alonso Martínez. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (120€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hospes Madrid ★★ One of the finest boutique hotels in Madrid, Hospes Madrid is housed in a restored 19th-century town house on Plaza de la Independencia, facing Puerta del Alcalá. It also lies across the street from the entrance to the Parque del Retiro and just steps from Calle Serrano, the chic shopping artery. The rooms are spacious, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows—often overlooking the rooftops of Madrid—and the decoration, for the most part, is in muted grays and whites, with the bathrooms clad in marble. There is also a trio of bar/lounges and a remarkable on-site restaurant, **Senzone** (p. 108).

Plaza de la Independencia 3, 28001 Madrid. www.hospes.com. ✆ **91-432-29-11.** 47 units. 189€–240€ double; 388€–620€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 37€. Metro: Retiro. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants;

bar; airport transfers (135€); exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Adler ★★ At the intersection of Velázquez and Goya streets, this is one of the most elegant places to stay in Madrid. You're housed in grand comfort at a location nicknamed "the golden triangle of art" (near the Prado, Reina Sofía, and the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection). The exclusive shops of Serrano are also near at hand. The classic building has been carefully restored and offers gracious comfort in a setting that evokes the 1880s but includes decidedly modern touches. The guest rooms provide ultimate comfort with luxe furnishings and totally modernized bathrooms.

Calle Velázquez 33, 28001 Madrid. www.adlermadrid.com. ✆ **866/376-7831** in the U.S. and Canada, or 91-426-32-20. Fax 91-426-32-21. 45 units. 250€–495€ double; from 690€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Velázquez. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (105€); babysitting; bikes; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

Orfila ★★★ 🎁 This small 19th-century palace has been transformed into a chic boutique hotel that's a member of the luxurious Relais Châteax chain. Located in an exclusive residential area, the hotel is an oasis of tranquillity in Madrid, and it operates on the principle of the four *C*s—character, courtesy, charm, and cuisine—and lives up to its motto. Many of the furnishings are from the 19th century, purchased in countries around Europe. It is the only major hotel in Madrid where every guest room is distinct from the others in both architecture and decoration. Guests check into a lobby that was once a courtyard receiving guests who arrived by horse-pulled carriage. In addition to its deluxe restaurant, the hotel boasts a terrace, an English-style bar, and a tearoom, one of the most fashionable places to gather in Madrid in the late afternoon.

Orfila 6, 28010 Madrid. www.orfilahotel.com. ✆ **91-702-77-70.** Fax 91-702-77-72. 32 units. 205€–305€ double; 300€–555€ executive suite; from 596€ deluxe suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Metro: Alonso Martínez. Bus: 21. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

EXPENSIVE

Hesperia Madrid ★★★ A member of the "Leading Hotels of the World," the Hesperia is a citadel of grace, comfort, and stylishly minimalist charm. Small Japanese gardens are located throughout the building, and there are many Asian influences in the decor, along with the most modern fixtures—exemplified by the chic bathrooms and bed linens. Suites are among the most luxurious in Madrid (some come with their own butler). Even those not staying here often visit to sample the cuisine of **Santceloni** (p. 105).

Paseo de la Castellana 57, 28046 Madrid. www.hesperia-madrid.com. ✆ **91-210-88-00.** Fax 91-210-88-89. 170 units. 145€–350€ double; from 450€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Gregorio Marañón. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; access to health club; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

High Tech President Castellana ★ ☺ 🎁 This hotel takes high tech seriously. It lies off the Paseo de la Castellana in the business district, which is the main street of New Madrid—as opposed to the Gran Vía, the main street of Old Madrid. The hotel attracts both business travelers and tourists to its six floors, two of which are devoted to meeting rooms and guest rooms preferred by commercial clients. Visitors like its severe modernity on the other four floors, which are equipped with the latest technology. As the elevator lets you out, you might think you're entering a disco. Except for purple neon lights, the hall is dark. High-tech bedrooms are equipped with free laptops, a 20-inch TV, hydroshowers with a sauna, and king-size beds. There are also 28 spacious family rooms equipped with queen-size, twin, or bunk beds. The beds are among the best of any hotel in Madrid, with faux-leather headboards.

Marqués de Villamagna 4, 28001 Madrid. www.presidentcastellanahotel.com. ☎ **91-577-19-51.** Fax 91-577-19-54. 104 units. 81€–145€ double; 115€–165€ family room. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Rubén Darío. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Jardín de Recoletos ★ 🏷 Built in 1999, this hotel is close to both the financial district and the best shops. A contemporary apartment-hotel, it stands on a quiet street close to the Plaza Colón, one of the major traffic arteries of Madrid. The inviting lobby has sleek marble floors and a stained-glass ceiling; adjacent is a combined cafe and restaurant. Most of the rooms are spacious and attractively decorated in a traditional style, with small sitting and dining areas. The bedrooms come with well-equipped kitchenettes—unusual for Madrid. If you want to pay extra, you can book either a unit rated "superior" or a suite that offers a hydromassage bathroom and a big terrace.

Gil de Santivañes 6, 28001 Madrid. www.vphoteles.com. ☎ **91-781-16-40.** Fax 91-781-16-41. 43 units. 129€–179€ double; 189€–235€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 21€. Metro: Serrano. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchenette, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

Rafaelhoteles Orense ★ At first glance, you might mistake this silver-and-glass tower for one of the many upscale condominium complexes surrounding it on all sides. Stylish and streamlined, with a design inaugurated in the late 1980s, it offers reproduction Oriental carpets and conservatively contemporary furniture that's comfortable, tasteful, and upscale. Accommodations, equipped along the lines of a private apartment, are appropriate for a stay of up to several weeks.

Pedro Teixeira 5, 28020 Madrid. www.rafaelhoteles.com. ☎ **91-597-15-68.** Fax 91-597-12-95. 140 units. 118€–157€ double; from 173€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Metro: Santiago Bernabeu. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Vincci SoMa ★ Service here is about the best in Madrid: The moment you enter this hotel (formerly the Bauzá Hotel), you notice the young bellhops wearing the words "Can I help you?" embroidered in English on their uniforms. They mean it. The fashionable hotel lies in the chic Salamanca shopping district. Modern style is combined with comfort, as reflected in the attractive public rooms and the tastefully furnished bedrooms. There is a passion for details here: The colors are muted, as is the music, and there are such thoughtful extras as a library. Except for a splash of cherry red here and there, bedrooms are mostly monochromatic and are especially noted for their sound systems. Double-paned windows help block the noise of this busy part of Madrid.

Calle Goya 79, 28001 Madrid. www.vinccihoteles.com. ☎ **91-435-75-45.** Fax 91-431-09-43. 167 units. 79€–220€ double; 205€–388€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 23€. Metro: Goya. **Amenities:**

Restaurant; bar; bikes; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Residencia Don Diego On the fifth floor of an elevator building, Don Diego is in a residential/commercial neighborhood that's relatively convenient to many of the city monuments. The vestibule contains an elegant winding staircase with a balustrade supported by iron griffin heads. The hotel is warm and inviting, filled with leather couches and attractively angular but comfortable furniture. Guest rooms are small but comfortable for the price. The staff is very service oriented and keeps the place humming efficiently.

Calle de Velázquez 45, 28001 Madrid. www.hostaldondiego.com. ☎ **91-435-07-60.** Fax 91-431-42-63. 58 units. 60€–85€ double; 75€–127€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 28€. Metro: Velázquez. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Gran Vía & Plaza de España

MODERATE

Anaco Modest yet modern, the Anaco is just off the Gran Vía but opens onto a tree-shaded plaza. It's for those who want a clean resting place for a good price and don't expect much more. The rooms are compact and contemporary, with built-in headboards, reading lamps, and lounge chairs. Ask for one of the five terraced rooms on the top floor, which rent for no extra charge.

Tres Cruces 3, 28013 Madrid. www.anacohotel.com. ☎ **91-522-46-04.** Fax 91-531-64-84. 39 units. 120€ double; 151€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Gran Vía, Callao, or Puerta del Sol. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

De Las Letras ★ 🎁 This hotel with its youthful vibe was inspired by literature. A member of the Barcelona-based Anima Hotels chain, it stands in the heart of the Gran Vía, the erstwhile main street of Madrid. Inscriptions by notable Spanish writers adorn walls in the public areas, with stone carvings and original hand-painted tiles. The wood-and-iron elevator remains from the original 1917 building. The contemporary bedrooms are painted in vivid colors such as ocher or burgundy, and most units have wooden floors with high ceilings. Bathrooms are the latest in modern design, and each suite opens onto a terrace with a whirlpool.

Gran Vía 11, 28013 Madrid. www.hoteldelasletras.com. ☎ **91-523-79-80.** Fax 91-523-79-81. 103 units. 133€–174€ double; 210€–300€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Metro: Sevilla or Gran Vía. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Catalonia Gran Vía ★ In the heart of Madrid, this hotel is located in a beautifully restored turn-of-the-20th-century building that's a modernist landmark. It was constructed in 1898 by Emilio Salas y Cortés, one of the teachers of the great Barcelona architect Gaudí. Some of Madrid's most important attractions are within an easy walk, including the Prado, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, and Plaza Mayor with its rustic taverns. The guest rooms come in different sizes, each comfortably furnished and beautifully maintained. You may want to sample the Catalán cuisine in the on-site restaurant, **Pedrera** (especially if Barcelona is not on your itinerary).

Gran Vía 9, 28013 Madrid. www.hoteles-catalonia.es. ✆ **91-531-22-22.** Fax 91-531-54-69. 185 units. 80€–205€ double; from 117€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Gran Vía. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Liabeny The Liabeny, behind an austere stone facade, is in a prime location midway between the Gran Vía and Puerta del Sol. It has seven floors of comfortable, contemporary guest rooms, which are freshly renovated and a bit spare. They are of a good size and functionally furnished with comfortable beds and neatly organized bathrooms.

Salud 3, 28013 Madrid. www.liabeny.es. ✆ **91-531-90-00.** Fax 91-532-74-21. 217 units. 114€–125€ double; 140€–170€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Metro: Plaza del Callao or Gran Vía. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

H10 Villa de la Reina ★ Overlooking Plaza Cibeles in the heart of Madrid, this sleek and modern hotel hides behind a chunky design from the early 20th century. The building has been delightfully restored, and today it's a bastion of comfort and charm. Bedrooms are small to midsize and are tastefully and comfortably appointed. Many extras abound, such as scales in the bathrooms along with magnifying mirrors. Their breakfast buffet features no fewer than 60 homemade baked products. In the on-site restaurant, go for the Mediterranean cuisine or the daily chef's specials.

Gran Vía 22, 28013 Madrid. www.hotelh10villadelareina.com. ✆ **91-523-91-01.** Fax 91-521-75-22. 75 units. 95€–210€ double; 119€–350€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Gran Vía. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Art District & Paseos

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hotel Villa Real ★★★ It's not on the same level as the Ritz (see below), but it is the first major hotel nearby to give the Westin Palace (see below) serious competition. Until 1989, the Villa Real was little more than a run-down 19th-century apartment house across a three-sided park from the Spanish parliament (Congreso de los Diputados), between Puerta del Sol and Paseo del Prado. Since then, extensive renovations have produced this stylish hotel patronized by Spain's cognoscenti. The facade combines an odd mix of neoclassical and Aztec motifs and is guarded by footmen and doormen. Rooms at the Villa Real are more consistent in quality than those offered by its neighbor the Westin, but they lack the latter's mellow charm and patina. Each unit has soundproofing, a sunken salon with leather-upholstered furniture, and built-in furniture accented with burlwood inlays. Rooms are mostly large and bright.

Plaza de las Cortes 10, 28014 Madrid. www.derbyhotels.com/VillaReal-Hotel-Madrid. ✆ **91-420-37-67.** Fax 91-420-25-47. 98 units. 160€–430€ double; 230€–645€ junior suite; 1,200€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 26€. Metro: Sevilla or Banco de España. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (75€); babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD (in some units), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (20€ per 24 hr.).

The Ritz ★★★ With soaring ceilings and graceful columns, the Ritz offers all the luxury and pampering you'd expect from a grand hotel. Although the building has been thoroughly modernized, great effort was expended to retain its Belle Epoque character and architectural details. No other Madrid hotel, except the Westin Palace (see below), has a more storied past. The Ritz was built in 1908 by King Alfonso XIII with the aid of César Ritz. It looks onto the circular Plaza de la Lealtad in the center of town, facing the Prado, the Palacio de Villahermosa, and the Stock Exchange, and is near 120-hectare (297-acre) Parque del Retiro. Its facade has been designated a historic monument. The glory days of 1910 live on in the units with their roomy closets, antique furnishings, and hand-woven carpets.

Plaza de la Lealtad 5, 28014 Madrid. www.ritz.es. ☎ **800/237-1236** in the U.S. and Canada, or 91-701-67-67. Fax 91-701-67-76. 167 units. 260€–455€ double; from 551€ junior suite; from 1,454€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 35€. Metro: Atocha or Banco de España. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (120€); concierge; exercise room; room service; sauna; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

The Westin Palace ★★★ The Palace is an ornate Victorian "wedding cake" known as the *gran dueña* of Spanish hotels. It was inaugurated by King Alfonso XIII in 1912 and covers an entire city block. Facing the Prado and Neptune Fountain, it lies within walking distance of the main shopping center. Architecturally, the Palace captures the grand pre–World War I style, with an emphasis on space and comfort. Although it doesn't achieve the snob appeal of its nearby siblings, the Ritz and the Villa Real, it's one of the largest hotels in Madrid and offers first-class service. The hotel has conservative, traditional units with plenty of space, large bathrooms, and lots of extras. Guest rooms vary widely, with the best rooms located on the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors. Rooms on the side are noisy and lack views.

Plaza de las Cortes 7, 28014 Madrid. www.westinpalacemadrid.com. ☎ **888/625-4988** in the U.S., or 91-360-80-00. Fax 91-360-81-00. 466 units. 235€–600€ double; from 475€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Valet parking 35€. Metro: Banco de España. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfers (100€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (19€ per 24 hr.).

EXPENSIVE

AC Palacio del Retiro ★★ Perhaps the best-located hotel in Madrid, this well-run oasis across from the Parque del Retiro sits close to the cultural triangle formed by the Thyssen-Bornemisza, Prado, and Reina Sofía museums. The restored building dates from the early 20th century and is a protected National Heritage monument. Its interior has been completely restored to modern tastes. Much of its elegant past can be seen in the stained-glass windows from Paris, the ceramics handmade in Talavera, the marble floors, and the Grecian columns. The midsize bedrooms are stylish and comfortable, with state-of-the-art bathrooms. Most bedrooms open onto panoramic views of Retiro Park.

Alfonso XII 14, 28014 Madrid. www.ac-hotels.com. ☎ **91-523-74-60.** Fax 91-523-74-61. 51 units. 265€–290€ double; from 570€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Banco de España. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (114€–121€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

HUSA Hotel Paseo del Arte ★ Timing is everything with this contemporary international style hotel. If it's hosting a conference, rooms are overpriced. If not, they are a steal. The Paseo del Arte is a good business hotel—and it's also across a small plaza from the Reina Sofía and just down the street a short walk from the flamenco joint Casa Patas. (There's a chocolatería on the way, if you're walking home late.) Bargain with them to include breakfast, as the buffet is one of Madrid's best. A handful of suites with terraces are some of the nicest rooms in the city.

Atocha 123, 28014, Madrid. www.husa.es. ✆ **91-298-48-00.** 260 units. 90€–160€ double. Nearby parking 30€. Metro: Atocha. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Nacional ★ This stately hotel was built around 1900 to house the hundreds of passengers flooding into Madrid through the nearby Atocha railway station. In 1997, a well-respected nationwide chain, NH Hotels, ripped out much of the building's dowdy interior, reconstructing the public areas and guest rooms with a smooth, seamless decor that takes maximum advantage of the building's tall ceilings and large spaces. Guest rooms feature modern designer decor (including avant-garde art), giving the units a welcoming ambience. Today, the Nacional is a destination for dozens of corporate conventions.

Paseo del Prado 48, 28014 Madrid. www.nh-hotels.com. ✆ **91-429-66-29.** Fax 91-369-15-64. 214 units. 105€–145€ double; 145€–168€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 28€. Metro: Atocha. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Mora This hotel can be recommended for location alone—it's across from Paseo del Prado and the Botanical Gardens. It is a fine and decent choice, especially if you want to make several visits to the Prado. The reception is bright and airy, with *trompe l'oeil* marble columns and carpets. Most of the guest rooms range from midsize to spacious, and each is comfortably and tastefully furnished, though far from lavish. Opt for a guest room opening onto the street, as these have the best views of the gardens and the magnificent Prado itself. Double-glazed windows keep down some of the noise level.

Paseo del Prado 32, 28014 Madrid. www.hotelmora.com. ✆ **91-420-15-69.** Fax 91-420-05-64. 62 units. 84€ double; 102€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 21€. Metro: Atocha. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Outlying Hotels

Ayre Gran Hotel Colón Built in 1966, this small convention hotel offers comfortable yet reasonably priced accommodations in a modern setting. East of Parque del Retiro, it's just a few minutes from the city center by subway. More than half of the guest rooms have private balconies, and all contain traditional furniture, much of it built in. Units vary in size but most offer roomy comfort, dark-wood beds, and adequate closet space. One of the Colón's founders was an interior designer, which accounts for the unusual stained-glass windows and murals in the public rooms and the paintings by Spanish artists in the lounge.

Pez Volador 1–11, 28007 Madrid. www.ayrehoteles.com. ✆ **91-400-99-00.** Fax 91-573-08-09. 360 units. 70€–117€ double; from 145€ junior suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 28€. Metro: Sáinz de Baranda. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Claridge This contemporary building beyond Parque del Retiro is about 5 minutes from the Prado by taxi or subway. The guest rooms are well organized and pleasantly styled, though small and compact. They include small, well-organized bathrooms containing tub/shower combos. You can take your meals in the hotel's cafeteria and relax in the modern lounge.

Plaza Conde de Casal 6, 28007 Madrid. www.hotelclaridgemadrid.com. ☎ **91-551-94-00.** Fax 91-501-03-85. 150 units. 87€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 19€. Metro: Atocha or Conde de Casal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (6.50€ per hr.).

Hotel Silken Puerta América Madrid Madrid's bid for most self-conscious contemporary design, the Puerta América hired 19 architects from 13 different countries to showcase their work. Designers included Richard Gluckman, architect of the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, and Norman Foster, creator of the Millennium Bridge in London. Some critics call the result an architectural Tower of Babel, while others applaud it as the architectural equivalent of a box of mixed chocolates. Built at a staggering cost of $92 million, Puerta América Madrid rises 12 floors in a glass-and-steel tower. The location, beside a six-lane expressway about 8km (5 miles) from the airport, is a 15-minute taxi ride from downtown Madrid. Each room is distinctive, ranging from an igloo-esque space with almost no furnishings to a bedroom all in midnight black and charcoal gray.

Av. de América 41, 28002 Madrid. www.hotelpuertamerica.com. ☎ **91-744-54-00.** Fax 91-744-54-01. 342 units. 105€–219€ double; from 750€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Cartagena. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (85€); concierge; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

5

SIDE TRIPS FROM MADRID

Madrid makes an ideal base for excursions because it is surrounded by some of Spain's major attractions. The side trips in this chapter, both in the immediate Comunidad de Madrid and in Castilla–La Mancha and Castilla y León, range from 29km to 161km (18–100 miles) outside Madrid. A few spots—notably El Escorial, Chinchón, and even Aranjuez—lend themselves well to day trips that allow you to return to Madrid by nightfall. The cities of the region, however, reveal their real character in the evenings and early mornings. It is a shame not to stay overnight, so we have included a selection of hotels in each destination.

The wondrous cities and towns ringing Madrid include Toledo, with its medieval streets and El Greco masterpieces; over-the-top tombs of royalty in El Escorial monastery; Segovia's clifftop castle and iconic Roman aqueduct; Ávila's dizzying ramparts and mystical religious sites; and the Bourbon palaces at La Granja. With its bluff-top Old City and stunning contemporary art, Cuenca is the longest excursion, though under an hour by high-speed train. See chapter 6 for a selection of other cities in Castilla y León, each of which is ideally visited on an overnight trip, rather than on a day stopover from Madrid.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE MADRID

- **Seeing a city through a painter's eyes:** Domenikos Theotokopoulos, known as El Greco (1541–1614), was perhaps the greatest Spanish painter of his day not lured away to Madrid. He painted his adopted home of Toledo in phantasmagoric style, and you can still see the city from his vantage points.
- **Overcoming vertigo in Cuenca:** The precipitous 60m (197-ft.) drop into the Huécar river gorge might make you swallow hard, but the sensation of being suspended in the clouds makes it worth treading cautiously across the Puente de San Pablo pedestrian bridge.
- **Taking measure of an ancient fortress:** Pacing off the ramparts of Ávila is the best way to see how a hilltop walled city could be secure against invaders. Imagine laughing in the faces of the impotent army below.
- **Licking greasy fingers in Segovia:** Segovians are so fanatical about their roast suckling pig that the chefs have an organization to authenticate restaurant preparations. It helps to dine with others so you can order and devour the whole tender piglet.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Alcázar of Toledo.**

- **Seeing the public and private side of a monarch:** Between the elaborate royal tombs in El Escorial and the grandeur of the Palacio Real in Aranjuez, Felipe II comes off a tad bombastic. Then you see his private cell at El Escorial, where he was no longer king but just a man prostrate before his god.

TOLEDO ★★★

68km (42 miles) SW of Madrid, 137km (85 miles) SE of Ávila

If you have only 1 day for an excursion outside Madrid, go to Toledo, where even its medieval Arab, Jewish, and Christian elements have not entirely eclipsed the Roman and Visigothic eras. The hilltop Old City is a national landmark and its appearance has hardly changed since it inspired El Greco in the 16th century. The close, narrow streets—barely wide enough to let a man and his donkey pass—offer cool, welcome shade in the summer and a shield from winter winds.

Surrounded on three sides by a bend in the Tagus River, Toledo overlooks the arid plains of La Mancha from a high bluff—a natural fortress in the center of the Iberian Peninsula. A logical choice for the capital of Spain, it lost that role to Madrid in the 1500s, but has remained the national religious center as the seat of the primate of Spain.

If you're driving, the much-painted skyline of Toledo comes into view about 6km (3¾ miles) from the city. When you cross the Tagus River via 14th-century Puente San Martín, the scene is reminiscent of El Greco's moody, storm-threatened *View of Toledo,* one version of which hangs in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The artist reputedly painted that view from a hillside that is now the site of **Parador de Toledo** (p. 160). If you arrive at the right time, you can enjoy an aperitif on the *parador*'s terrace and watch one of Toledo's famous violet sunsets.

Essentials

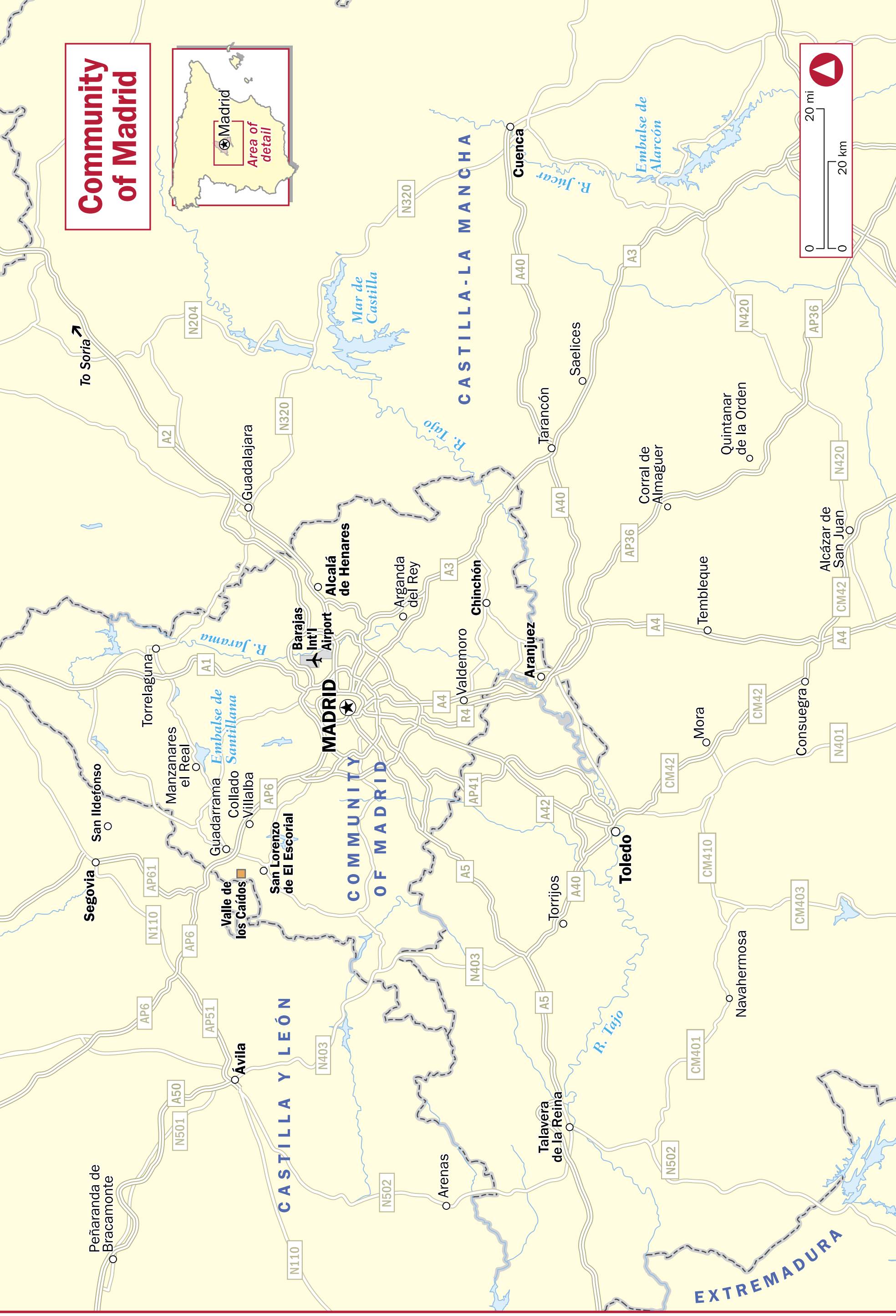
GETTING THERE RENFE **trains** run here frequently every day. Those departing Madrid's Atocha railway station for Toledo run daily from 6:50am to 9:50pm; those leaving Toledo for Madrid run daily from 6:50am to 9:30pm. Traveling time is approximately 35 minutes on an *alta velocidad* (high-speed) train. The fare one-way is 11€. For train information in Madrid, call ✆ **90-232-03-20,** or visit www.renfe.es.

From Madrid, it's also feasible to take the **bus** instead of the train. The main service is provided by **Alsa** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**). They depart daily, from Madrid's Estación de Plaza Elíptica, Avenida Vía Lusitana, between 6:30am and 11pm at 15- to 30-minute intervals. Travel time is 50 minutes to 1¼ hours, and a one-way transit costs 4.80€ and can be purchased only at the station.

Once you reach Toledo, you'll be deposited at the Estación de Autobuses, which lies beside the river, about 1.2km (¾ mile) from the historic center. Although many visitors opt to walk, be ready to climb a hill. Bus nos. 5 and 6 run from the station uphill to the center, charging 1€ for the brief ride. Pay the driver directly.

By **car,** exit Madrid via Cibeles (Paseo del Prado) and take the N-401 south.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Plaza del Consistorio 1 (www.toledo-turismo.com; ✆ **92-525-40-30**), is open daily 10am to 6pm.



Community of Madrid

Madrid
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CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
COMMUNITY OF MADRID
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
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MADRID
Barajas Int'l Airport
Alcalá de Henares
Arganda del Rey
Chinchón
Aranjuez
Valdemoro
Guadalajara
Torrelaguna
Manzanares el Real
Collado Villalba
Guadarrama
San Ildefonso
Segovia
Valle de los Caídos
San Lorenzo de El Escorial
Ávila
Peñaranda de Bracamonte
Arenas
Talavera de la Reina
Torrijos
Toledo
Mora
Consuegra
Navahermosa
Tembleque
Alcázar de San Juan
Corral de Almaguer
Quintanar de la Orden
Tarancón
Saelices
Cuenca
Embalse de Santillana
Embalse de Alarcón
Mar de Castilla
R. Jarama
R. Tajo
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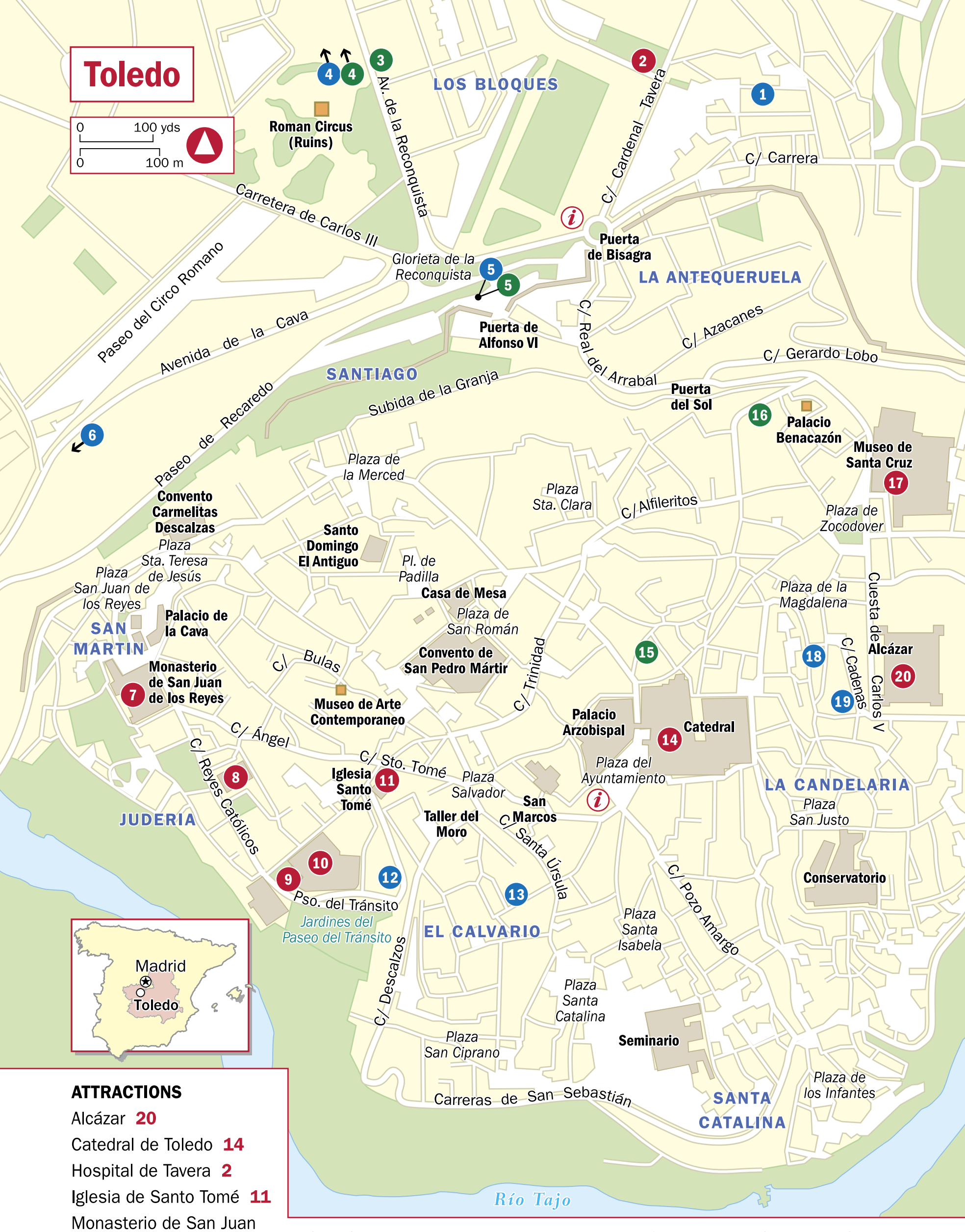
Exploring Toledo

Alcázar ★★ ☺ HISTORIC SITE The Alcázar, at the eastern edge of the Old City, dominates the Toledo skyline. It became world famous at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, when it underwent a 70-day siege that almost destroyed it. Today it has been rebuilt and houses the permanent collections of the **Museo del Ejército (Military Museum)** with such exhibits as a plastic model showing the fortress after the Civil War, electronic equipment used during the siege, and photographs taken during the height of the battle. A walking tour gives a realistic simulation of the siege. An outstanding array of exhibits from military history is on display, including El Cid's original sword. In addition, you can see the tent used by Carlos V in the Tunisian desert, as well as relics of Pizarro and Cortés, and an exceptional collection of Spanish armor. Look for a piece of the cross that Columbus carried with him when he landed in the New World. The original collection was assembled by the notorious Manuel Godoy, who rose from relative poverty to become the lover of María Luisa of Parma, wife of Carlos IV. Cuesta de Carlos V, no. 2, near the Plaza de Zocodover. ✆ **92-523-88-00.** Admission for Alcázar and museum 5€ adults, free for ages 18 and under, free for all visitors Sun. Oct–May Tues–Sun 10am–7pm; June–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–9pm. Closed Jan 1 and 6; May 1, 9, 24, 25; and Dec 31. Bus: 2.

Catedral de Toledo ★★ CATHEDRAL Ranked among the greatest Gothic structures, the cathedral actually reflects several styles, as more than 2½ centuries elapsed during its construction (1226–1493). Many historic events transpired here, including the proclamation that Juana la Loca (the Mad) and her husband, Felipe Hermoso (the Handsome), were heirs to the throne of Spain.

Among its art treasures, the *transparente* stands out; it's a wall of marble and florid baroque alabaster sculpture overlooked for years because the cathedral was too poorly lit. Sculptor Narcisco Tomé cut a hole in the ceiling, much to the

Toledo's skyline, with the Alcázar in the background.



Toledo

0 100 yds
0 100 m
Roman Circus (Ruins)
Av. de la Reconquista
LOS BLOQUES
C/ Cardenal Tavera
C/ Carrera
Carretera de Carlos III
Paseo del Circo Romano
Glorieta de la Reconquista
Puerta de Bisagra
LA ANTEQUERUELA
Avenida de la Cava
Puerta de Alfonso VI
C/ Real del Arrabal
C/ Azacanes
C/ Gerardo Lobo
SANTIAGO
Subida de la Granja
Puerta del Sol
Palacio Benacazón
Museo de Santa Cruz
Paseo de Recaredo
Plaza de la Merced
Plaza Sta. Clara
C/ Alfileritos
Plaza de Zocodover
Convento Carmelitas Descalzas
Plaza Sta. Teresa de Jesús
Plaza San Juan de los Reyes
Santo Domingo El Antiguo
Pl. de Padilla
Casa de Mesa
Plaza de San Román
Plaza de la Magdalena
Cuesta de Alcázar
Palacio de la Cava
SAN MARTIN
C/ Bulas
Convento de San Pedro Mártir
C/ Trinidad
C/ Cadenas
Carlos V
Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes
Museo de Arte Contemporaneo
Palacio Arzobispal
Catedral
C/ Ángel
C/ Sto. Tomé
Plaza del Ayuntamiento
LA CANDELARIA
C/ Reyes Católicos
Iglesia Santo Tomé
Plaza Salvador
San Marcos
Plaza San Justo
JUDERIA
Taller del Moro
C/ Santa Úrsula
C/ Pozo Amargo
Conservatorio
Pso. del Tránsito
Jardines del Paseo del Tránsito
EL CALVARIO
Plaza Santa Isabela
C/ Descalzos
Plaza Santa Catalina
Madrid
Toledo
Seminario
Plaza San Ciprano
Plaza de los Infantes
Carreras de San Sebastián
SANTA CATALINA
Río Tajo
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consternation of Toledans, and now sunlight touches the high-rising angels, a *Last Supper* in alabaster, and a Virgin in ascension.

The 16th-century **Capilla Mozárabe,** containing works by Juan de Borgoña, is another curiosity of the cathedral. Mass is still held here using a Mozarabic liturgy.

The **Treasure Room** has a 500-pound 15th-century gilded monstrance—allegedly made with gold brought back from the New World by Columbus—that is still carried through the streets of Toledo during the feast of Corpus Christi.

Other highlights of the cathedral include El Greco's *Twelve Apostles* and *Spoliation of Christ* and Goya's *Arrest of Christ on the Mount of Olives.*

The cathedral shop, where you buy tickets to enter, is well organized and stocks a variety of quality souvenirs, including ceramics and damascene.

Cardenal Cisneros 1. www.catedralprimada.es. ☎ **92-522-22-41.** Free admission to cathedral; Treasure Room 7€. Mon–Sat 10:30am–6pm; Sun 2–6pm. Bus: 2.

Hospital de Tavera ART MUSEUM This 16th-century Greco-Roman palace, north of the medieval ramparts of Toledo, was originally built by Cardinal Tavera; it now houses a private art collection. Titian's portrait of Carlos V hangs in the banquet hall. The museum owns five paintings by El Greco: *The Holy Family, The Baptism of Christ,* and portraits of St. Francis, St. Peter, and Cardinal Tavera. Ribera's *The Bearded Woman* also attracts many viewers. The library's book collection is priceless. In the nearby church is the mausoleum of Cardinal Tavera, designed by Alonso Berruguete.

Calle Cardenal Tavera 2. ☎ **92-522-04-51.** Admission 4.50€. Mon–Sat 10am–1:30pm and 3–6:30pm; Sun 10am–2:30pm. Closed Dec 25, Jan 1. Bus: 2.

Iglesia de Santo Tomé CHURCH This modest little 14th-century chapel, situated on a narrow street in the old Jewish Quarter, might have been overlooked had it not possessed El Greco's masterpiece ***The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*** ★★★, created in 1586. ***Tip:*** To avoid the hordes, go when the chapel first opens.

Plaza del Conde 4, Vía Santo Tomé. www.santotome.org. ☎ **92-525-60-98.** Admission 2.30€. Daily 10am–6:45pm (closes at 5:45pm in winter). Closed Dec 25 and Jan 1. Bus: 2.

Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes ★ MONASTERY Founded by Fernando and Isabel to commemorate their triumph over the Portuguese at Toro in 1476, this church was started in 1477 according to the plans of architect Juan Guas. It was finished, together with the splendid cloisters, in 1504, dedicated to

Toledo as El Greco Saw It

While wandering through the heart of Toledo is a delight, it's almost as memorable to view Toledo from afar. It still looks as El Greco painted it. For the best perspective, take the **Carretera de Circunvalación,** the road that runs 3km (1¾ miles) on the far bank of the Tagus. This road makes a circular loop of the river from the Alcántara to San Martín Bridge. Clinging to the hillsides are rustic dwellings and extensive olive groves (cigarrales). The cigarrales of the Imperial City were immortalized by Tirso de Molina, the 17th-century dramatist, in his trilogy ***Los Cigarrales de Toledo.***

St. John the Evangelist, and used from the beginning by the Franciscan friars. An example of Gothic-Spanish-Flemish style, San Juan de los Reyes was restored after the damage caused during Napoleon's invasion and after its abandonment in 1835. Since 1954, it has been entrusted again to the Franciscans. The church is located at the extreme western edge of the Old Town, midway between the Puente (bridge) of San Martín and the Puerta (gate) of Cambrón.

Calle Reyes Católicos 17. www.sanjuandelosreyes.org. ☎ **92-522-38-02.** Admission 2.30€ adults, 1.80€ seniors, free for children 4 and under. Winter daily 10am–5:30pm; summer daily 10am–6:30pm. Bus: 2.

Museo del Greco ART MUSEUM Located adjacent to the old synagogue, this small but select institution is the only museum in the world devoted to the painter Domenikos Theotokopoulos, known as El Greco. It contains extensive works from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, with especially good examples from the last years of his life. The galleries contain a complete set of his portraits of the apostles, and well as his famous *retablo* of San Bernardino. Among other works usually on display is one of El Greco's many versions of the *View and Plan of Toledo.* The accompanying interpretation effectively reveals the painting as a Rosetta stone of Toledo society in El Greco's era. The museum also covers his formative years before coming to Toledo, explores the workings of his studio and assistants, and displays a number of fine canvases by his followers. The house setting for the museum shows how the painter and others of his time actually lived.

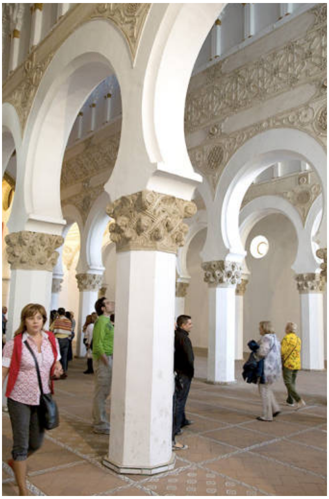
Paseo del Tránsito, s/n. http://museodelgreco.mcu.es. ☎ **92-522-36-65.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students, free for children 17 and under and seniors, free for all visitors Sun and daily after 2pm. Apr–Sept Tues–Sat 9:30am–8:30pm, Sun 10am–3pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Closed Jan 1, May 1, June 7, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31. Bus: 2.

Museo-Hospital de Santa Cruz ★★ ART MUSEUM Today a museum of art and sculpture, this was originally a 16th-century Spanish Renaissance hospice, founded by Cardinal Mendoza, "the third king of Spain," who helped Fernando and Isabel gain the throne. The facade is a stunning architectural achievement in the classical Plateresque style. The major artistic treasure inside is El Greco's *The Assumption of the Virgin,* his last known work. Paintings by Goya and Ribera are also on display along with gold items, opulent antique furnishings, Flemish tapestries, and even Visigoth artifacts. In the museum patio, you stumble across fragments of carved stone and sarcophagus lids. One of the major exhibits is of a large Astrolabio tapestry of the zodiac from the 1400s. In the basement, you can see artifacts from archaeological digs throughout the province.

Calle Miguel de Cervantes 3. ☎ **92-522-10-36.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–6:30pm; Sun 10am–2pm. Bus: 5 or 6. Pass beneath the granite archway on the eastern edge of Plaza de Zocodover and walk about 1 block.

Sinagoga del Tránsito ★ SYNAGOGUE Next to the El Greco Museum stands this moving and once critical house of worship for Toledo's large Jewish population. The 14th-century building is noted for its superb stucco Hebrew inscriptions, including psalms inscribed along the tops of the walls and a poetic description of the Temple on the east wall. The synagogue is the most important part of the **Museo Sefardí (Sephardic Museum),** which opened in 1971 and contains art objects as well as tombstones with Hebrew epigraphy, some dated before 1492.

Calle Samuel Leví s/n, Paseo Transito. http://museosefardi.mcu.es. ✆ **92-522-36-65.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students, free for children 17 and under and seniors, free for all visitors Sun and daily after 2pm. Apr–Sept Tues–Sat 9:30am–8:30pm, Sun 10am–3pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Closed Jan 1, May 1, June 7, Dec 24–25, and Dec 31. Bus: 2.



The interior of the Sinagoga del Tránsito.

Sinagoga de Santa María la Blanca SYNAGOGUE In the late 12th century, the Jews of Toledo erected an important synagogue in the Almohada style, which employs graceful horseshoe arches and ornamental horizontal moldings. Although the synagogue had been converted into a Christian church by the early 15th century, much of the original structure remains, including the five naves and elaborate Mudéjar decorations, which are mosque-like in their effect. The synagogue lies on the western edge of the city, midway between the Sinagoga del Tránsito and San Juan de los Reyes.

Calle Reyes Católicos 4. ✆ **92-522-72-57.** Admission 2.30€. Apr–Sept daily 10am–6:45pm; Oct–Mar daily 10am–5:45pm. Bus: 2 or 12.

Where to Eat

EXPENSIVE

Adolfo Restaurante ★ LA MANCHAN Located less than a minute's walk north of the cathedral, Adolfo is one of the most upscale restaurants in town. Self-consciously proud of representing the traditions of La Manchan cooking, the restaurant features such classics as partridge with white beans and roasted venison. These dishes are prepared with an eye to presentation (almost everything savory is enrobed in a glazing sauce) and presented at the table with considerable pomp and circumstance. One of the lingering effects of Arabic cookery in this part of Spain is the extensive use of fruit and other sweeteners in the savory dishes. Roast suckling pig is often prepared with green apples, while roast apples and turnips accompany the stewed bull's tail (*rabo de toro*). Like so many buildings in Toledo, parts of the restaurant building date from the 1400s, and the decor uses ancient hand-hewn beams and faded frescoes to conjure up an air of antiquity.

Hombre de Palo 7. www.adolforestaurante.com. ✆ **92-522-73-21.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 25€–43€; tasting menu 86€–104€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Bus: 5 or 6.

Casón de los López ★ LA MANCHAN A short walk from Plaza de Zocodover, this pleasant, seriously old-fashioned restaurant serves very traditional La Manchan cuisine with a strong emphasis on wild and farmed game.

The Hot Dining Ticket in Toledo Province

At a point 37km (23 miles) south of Madrid and 34km (21 miles) north of Toledo lies the finest restaurant in Toledo province: **Restaurante El Bohío,** Av. Castilla–La Mancha 81, Illescas (www.elbohio.com; ✆ **92-551-11-26**), with a far grander cuisine than you'll find in the city of Toledo itself. Illescas is a dusty, sleepy pueblo, but not so this citadel of fine dining. The decor emulates an upscale roadside *taberna* with cast-iron fixtures, dark mirrors, and stained glass. Chef José "Pepe" Rodríguez deconstructs and reinterprets many of the classical dishes from Castellano cuisine, including the ultrasimple *sopa de ajo*—a chicken broth with stale bread and garlic puréed in it. But Rodríguez updates the dish by serving it in a glass with airy croutons and a dusting of pulverized garlic and paprika ice cream. Suckling pig is likewise gussied up, perfectly roasted and flavored, and served with a sweetbread salad, crackling pork skins, and blood sausage. Rodríguez keeps to his regional roots—what he refers to as his "taste memory"—but has reinvented the dishes, making them lighter and yet even more flavorful. Meals cost from 40€ to 60€. The restaurant is closed Monday night and throughout August. Reservations are recommended.

Some of the best dishes are casseroles featuring wild hare with mushrooms, partridge in red-wine sauce, or squab. The house specialty is loin of venison, served with garlicky fresh spinach and a mushroom-cream sauce. The braised beef dishes are also quite authentic. The restaurant building itself is a museum piece, and the furnishings include many antiques. A splashing fountain and caged songbirds help create the mellow atmosphere. By the way, much of the furniture is for sale. Hope that some other diner won't buy the table out from under you when your main course is being served.

Sillería 3. www.casontoledo.com. ✆ **90-219-83-44.** Reservations required. Main courses 15€–24€; tasting menu 39€–69€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm; Mon–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Bus: 2.

MODERATE

Alacena TOLEDAN/SPANISH We feel a little sorry for the chefs of this restaurant in the Hotel Beatriz Toledo Auditorium & Spa, since they produce a lot of menus for conferences and other larger groups. But they have some serious chops when it comes to making meals for individual clients as well. Like many Toledan restaurants, the repertoire does not steer too far from the culinary traditions of La Mancha, and Alacena's version of *perdiz Toledano* (stewed partridge) is a good one. So, too, is the roasted venison sirloin in mushroom sauce and the casserole of rabbit smothered in onions and root vegetables. Sometimes the chefs feature a specialty month, such as November, when they celebrate Galician cuisine by shipping in turbot, hake, pollock, and goose barnacles (*percebes*) from the northwest coast of Spain.

In the Hotel Beatriz Toledo Auditorium & Spa, Carretera de Ávila. www.beatrizhoteles.com. ✆ **92-526-91-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–35€; fixed-price menu 35€; *menú degustación* 42€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Bus: 2.

Hostal del Cardenal ★ SPANISH Toledo's best-known restaurant is owned by the same people who run Madrid's Sobrino de Botín (p. 102), and serves La Manchan cuisine not terribly different from its big-city counterpart. Although

Toledo is in Castilla–La Mancha rather than Castilla y León, one of the house specialties is roast suckling pig in the style of Segovia. When the server smashes the carcass to break it into serving pieces, diners never fail to applaud and shoot lots of photos. El Cardenal has a marvelously old-fashioned dignity. To appreciate that atmosphere to the fullest, arrive early to enjoy a glass of sherry in the bar or courtyard.

Paseo de Recaredo 24. www.hostaldelcardenal.com. ✆ **92-522-49-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Bus: 5 or 6 from rail station.

INEXPENSIVE

El Catavinos 🎁 SPANISH/CASTILIAN *Catavinos* means "wine taster" in Spanish, and indeed this charming restaurant began as a wine cellar. On the periphery of the center, a 10-minute walk from Puerta de Bisagra, the restaurant has a bar downstairs and a restaurant upstairs decorated with old photographs of Peru. In fair weather, guests often eat on the terrace. The menu is filled with regional dishes, including such delicacies as partridge salad, bell peppers stuffed with minced hare, and grilled meatballs of mixed venison and veal simmered in a savory tomato sauce. The *menú degustación* is a cornucopia of seven different plates, and desserts include a cheesecake made from goat's milk with a sweet white wine. The only drawback here is the less-than-polished staff.

Av. Reconquista 10. ✆ **92-522-22-56.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–24€; *menú degustación* 32€ (minimum 2 people). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–midnight; Sun noon–4pm. Bus: 2.

Shopping

In swashbuckling days, the swordsmiths of Toledo were renowned. They're still around and still turning out swords today. Toledo is equally renowned for its *damasquinado,* or damascene work, the Moorish art of inlaying gold, copper, or silver threads against a matte black-steel backdrop. Today Toledo is filled with souvenir shops hawking damascene. The price depends on whether the item is handcrafted or machine made. Sometimes machine-made damascene is passed off as the more expensive handcrafted item, so you have to shop carefully. Bargaining is acceptable in Toledo, but if you get the price down, you can't pay with a credit card—only cash.

Around since the 1920s, **Damasquinados Suárez,** Circo Romano 8 (www.espaderias-suarez.com; ✆ **92-528-00-27**), has manufactured damascene work in various forms, ranging from unpretentious souvenir items to art objects of rare museum-quality beauty that sell for as much as 12,000€. You'll find swords, straight-edged razors, pendants, fans, and an array of pearls. The shop is open daily from 9:30am to 7pm year-round.

Marzipan (called *mazapán* locally) is often prepared by nuns and is a local specialty. Many shops in town specialize in this treat made of sweet almond paste.

The province of Toledo is also renowned for its pottery, which is sold in so many shops at competitive prices that it's almost unnecessary to recommend specific branches hawking these wares. However, over the years we've found that the large roadside emporiums on the outskirts of town on the main road to Madrid often are better bargains than the shops within the city walls, where rents are higher.

TOP OF THE pots

For the best deals on pottery, especially if you're interested in buying a lot of pieces, consider a trip to **Talavera la Reina,** 76km (47 miles) west of Toledo, where most of the pottery is made. Since Talavera is the province's largest city, it is hardly a picture-postcard little potter's village. Most of the shops lie along the town's main street, where store after store sells this distinctive pottery in multicolored designs. Make a point of visiting the "ceramic Sistine Chapel," as the **Basilica de Nuestra Señora del Prado ★,** Los Jardines del Prado 6, is known; and the stunning **Museo Ruiz de Luna,** Plaza de San Agustin 13 (✆ **925-800-149;** admission 1€; Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6:30pm, Sun 10am–2pm), which is built on the site of a 10th-century convent and traces the design evolution of Talavera wares from the 16th through the 20th centuries.

Pottery hunters also flock to **Puente del Arzobispo,** another ceramic center, known for its green-hued pottery. From Talavera, drive west on the N-V to Oropesa, and then south for 14km (8⅔ miles) to a fortified bridge across the Tagus. In general, ceramics here are cheaper than those sold in Toledo.

Just past Oropesa at the turnoff to Lagartera is where the highly renowned and sought-after embroidery of La Mancha originates. Virtually every cottage in Lagartera displays samples of this free-form floral stitching, shaped into everything from skirts to tablecloths. Of course, shops in Toledo are also filled with samples of this unique embroidery.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Despite the many tourists thronging its streets during the day, Toledo is quiet at night, with fewer dance clubs than you'd expect in a town of its size. If you want to hear recorded music, head for **Bar La Abadía,** Plaza San Nicolás 3 (✆ **92-525-11-40**), the restaurant bar where locals crowd elbow to elbow for pints of beer, glasses of wine, and access to the music of New York, Los Angeles, and London. **O'Brien's Irish Pub,** Armas 12 (✆ **92-521-26-65**), might seem more appropriate for the streets of Dublin than for Toledo, but a young crowd flocks here, and there's live music on Thursday nights. A truly hip wine-bar hangout is the gourmet shop owned by superchef Adolfo Muñoz, **Adolfo Colleción,** Nuncio Viejo 1 (✆ **925-224-244**). Enjoy wine and tapas, and mingle with Toledo's finest.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

AC Ciudad de Toledo ★★ This deluxe property is a member of a chain that includes the swank Santo Mauro in Madrid (p. 140) and lies on a beltway across the river, south of Toledo, near the *parador.* Enter this epitome of luxury living at the third floor, and proceed down through the spiraling architectural design to reach the rest of the hotel. Guest rooms are spacious and luxuriously furnished, all in contemporary styling. The suites have oversize bathtubs and hydromassage.

Carretera de Circunvalación 15, 45005 Toledo. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **92-528-51-25.** Fax 92-528-47-00. 49 units. 90€–170€ double; 150€–235€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 7 or 71. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Fontecruz Toledo ★★ This restored palace is the only luxury hotel within the historic core. Only a short walk from the cathedral, it is the most elegant lodging in the Toledo area, even better than the *parador* or the Hilton, although it lacks their panoramic views. The spacious bedrooms are tasteful and luxuriously furnished, each decorated with graphic works of some of Spain's leading contemporary artists, whose work is sold in the shops of the hotel. Furnishings are sumptuous throughout.

Plaza del Juego de Pelota 7, 45002 Toledo. www.fontecruzhoteles.com/hotel-fontecruz-toledo. ✆ **92-527-46-90.** Fax 92-527-46-91. 37 units. 94€–295€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 2. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hilton Buenavista Toledo ★ Integrated with a restored 16th-century palace in the valley well outside the walled city, the Hilton is only a 10-minute taxi ride from the historic center. You get the feeling that you're a pampered resort guest since you have an outdoor swimming pool, a spa, and even a cigar room at your disposal. The hotel is surrounded by well-manicured gardens. Bedrooms are spacious and luxuriously furnished, most of them opening onto panoramic views of Toledo. The marble-clad bathrooms are especially ritzy. At sunset, the hotel's Tajo River Club offers cocktails to sip while watching the sun set over Toledo.

Concilios de Toledo 1, 45005 Toledo. www.hoteltoledobuenavista.com. ✆ **92-528-980-00.** Fax 92-528-98-28. 117 units. 175€–250€ double; from 320€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 2. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (13€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Beatriz Toledo Auditorium & Spa ☺ If you have kids in tow and want a well air-conditioned retreat from Toledo's hot and ancient streets, book the Beatriz for its welcoming pool and great climate control. Built in the early 1990s and constantly refurbished, it is Toledo's largest hotel and often has rooms when other lodgings don't. The furnishings are tasteful and comfortable, and the location is only a 15-minute drive from the central Old City—or 10 minutes to the well-signposted Recaredo escalator. **Alacena** (p. 157) is the hotel's restaurant.

Carretera de Ávila, 45005 Toledo. www.hotelbeatriztoledo.com. ✆ **92-526-91-00.** Fax 92-521-58-65. 295 units. 64€–155€ double; 211€ junior suite; 300€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 2. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; children's playground; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Toledo ★★★ You'll have to make reservations well in advance to stay at this *parador,* which is built on the ridge of a rugged hill where El Greco is said to have painted his *View of Toledo,* at a point 4km (2½ miles) from the center. That view is still here, and it is without a doubt one of the grandest in the world. The main living room/lounge, finely furnished with old chests, leather chairs, and heavy tables, leads to a sunny terrace overlooking the city. On chilly nights you can sit by the fireplace. The guest rooms are spacious and beautifully furnished with reproductions of regional antique pieces.

Cerro del Emperador, 45002 Toledo. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-522-18-50.** Fax 92-522-51-66. 76 units. 120€–180€ double; 190€–232€ suite. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Hostal del Cardenal ★★ 🎁 The Hostal del Cardenal features wonderful rooms, albeit smaller than the options above, and is great for its old-time Toledo atmosphere. The entrance to this unusual hotel is set into the stone of the ancient city walls, a few steps from Bisagra Gate. To enter the hotel you must climb a series of terraces to the top of the crenellated walls of the ancient fortress. Here, grandly symmetrical and very imposing, is the *hostal,* the former residence of the 18th-century cardinal of Toledo, Señor Lorenzana. Just beyond the entrance, still atop the city wall, you'll find flagstone walkways, Moorish fountains, rose gardens, and cascading vines. The building has tiled walls; long, narrow salons; dignified Spanish furniture; and a smattering of antiques. Guest rooms are small to medium, each one well appointed.

Paseo de Recaredo 24, 45004 Toledo. www.elhostaldelcardenal.com. ✆ **92-522-49-00.** Fax 92-522-29-91. 27 units. 106€–137€ double; 146€–172€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free street parking. Bus: 5 or 6 from rail station. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Kris Doménico ☺ The countryside location is the big appeal of the Doménico, which sits among Los Cigarrales, the typical country houses lying south of the city. The entire district enjoys panoramic views over the Tagus River gorge. Although built in 1993, the building is constructed in a traditional style. Guest rooms are midsize and comfortably furnished. Some rooms have skylights. Second- and third-floor units have terraces opening onto breathtaking views of the city. The hotel is a 10-minute (3km/1¾-mile) drive to the historic core of Toledo, and much of that time is spent sitting in traffic.

Cerro del Emperador, 45002 Toledo. www.krishoteles.com. ✆ **92-528-01-01.** Fax 92-528-01-03. 50 units. 59€–133€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 7. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; outdoor pool; room service, Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Pintor El Greco ★ In the old Jewish Quarter, one of the most traditional and historic districts of Toledo, this hotel was converted from a typical *casa toledana* (house in Toledo) that had once been used as a bakery. With careful restoration, especially of its ancient facade, it was transformed into one of Toledo's best and most atmospheric small hotels. Decoration in both the public rooms and the bedrooms is in a traditional La Manchan style. Bedrooms come in a variety of shapes and sizes, as befits a building of this age. At the doorstep of the hotel are such landmarks as the Monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes, Sinagoga de Santa María la Blanca, Sinagoga del Tránsito, Museo del Greco, and Iglesia de Santo Tomé.

Alamillos del Tránsito 13, 45002 Toledo. www.hotel-pintorelgreco.com. ✆ **92-528-51-91.** Fax 92-521-58-19. 60 units. 60€–185€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. Bus: 2. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Imperio 🏷 Long a budget favorite, this modest hotel lies a few yards from the Alcázar and cathedral. Built in the 1980s, the hotel has been renovated, adding more comfort to the small rooms. The furnishings are spare, but the beds are comfortable. For the price, this is one of the city's best choices. Rooms on the second floor have balconies overlooking the street.

Cadenas 5, 45001 Toledo. www.terra.es/personal/himperio. ✆ **92-522-76-50.** Fax 92-525-31-83. 21 units. 44€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Bus: 2. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Martín A good, serviceable choice, the two-story Martín opened in 1992 near Bisagra Gate, the main medieval doorway to the city of Toledo. It lies only a 10-minute walk from the historic center. The hotel has a homey atmosphere, with a redbrick facade, old streetlights out front, and vertical windows. The interior is decorated in wood and pastel colors; the midsize rooms are furnished comfortably. Continental breakfast is served but costs extra.

Calle Espino 6, 45003 Toledo. www.hotelesmartin.com. ✆ **92-522-17-33.** Fax 92-522-19-18. 29 units. 55€–95€ double. MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 2. **Amenities:** Bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Santa Isabel In a building dating from the 15th century, Santa Isabel lies in the heart of Toledo, close to the cathedral and most sights of historical interest. Opposite the Convent of Santa Isabel from which it takes its name, the hotel retains much of its original character. The interior, however, has been modernized in a simple, unadorned fashion. Guest rooms, while small and minimally furnished, are immaculately kept with comfortable beds and well-equipped bathrooms. Some units have fine views of the interior patio; others open onto the street. Overflow guests are housed in a building next door, which offers an additional 19 comparable guest rooms in a mixture of modern and antique styles.

Calle Santa Isabel 24, 45002 Toledo. www.santaisabel.net. ✆ **92-525-31-20.** Fax 92-525-31-36. 42 units. 43€–80€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 5 or 6. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

ARANJUEZ ★

47km (29 miles) S of Madrid, 48km (30 miles) NE of Toledo

Located at the confluence of the Tagus and Jarama rivers, Aranjuez was once home to Bourbon kings in the spring and fall. With the manicured shrubbery, stately elms, fountains, and statues of the Palacio Real and surrounding compounds, Aranjuez remains a regal garden oasis in what is otherwise an unimpressive agricultural flatland known primarily for its strawberries and asparagus.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Trains** depart about every 15 minutes from Madrid's Atocha railway station to make the 50-minute trip to Aranjuez; the one-way fare costs 5€. Twice a day you can take an express train from Madrid to Toledo, which makes a brief stopover at Aranjuez. This trip takes only 30 minutes. Trains run less often along the east-west route to and from Toledo (a 40-min. ride). The Aranjuez station lies about 1.6km (1 mile) outside town. For information and schedules, visit www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.** You can walk between town and the station in about 15 minutes; another option is to take one of the taxis or buses that line up on Calle Stuart (2 blocks from the city tourist office, in the city center). The bus that makes the run from the center of Aranjuez to the railway station is marked n–z.

The Jardín de la Isla (Garden of the Island).

Buses for Aranjuez depart every 30 minutes from 6:30am to 11:45pm from Madrid's Estación Sur de Autobuses, Calle Méndez Álvaro. In Madrid, call ✆ **90-219-87-88** for information. Buses arrive in Aranjuez at the City Bus Terminal, Calle Infantas 16 (✆ **91-891-01-83**).

Driving is easy and takes about 30 minutes once you reach the southern city limits of Madrid. To reach Aranjuez, follow the signs to Aranjuez and Granada, taking Highway N-IV.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Antigua Carretera de Andalucía s/n (www.aranjuez.es; ✆ **91-891-04-27**), is open daily from 10am to 6pm.

Exploring Aranjuez

Casa del Labrador ★ PALACE "The House of the Worker," modeled after the Petit Trianon at Versailles, was built in 1803 by Carlos IV, who later abdicated in Aranjuez. The queen came here with her youthful lover, Godoy (whom she had elevated to the position of prime minister), and the feeble-minded Carlos didn't seem to mind a bit. Surrounded by beautiful gardens, the "bedless" palace—it's a pavilion with no bedchambers—is lavishly furnished in the grand style of the 18th and 19th centuries. The marble floors represent some of the finest workmanship of that day; the brocaded walls emphasize the luxurious lifestyle; and the royal toilet is a sight to behold. (In those days, royalty preferred an audience.) The clock here is one of the house treasures. The *casita* lies .8km (½ mile) east of the Royal Palace; those with a car can drive directly to it through tranquil Jardín del Príncipe.

Calle Reina, Jardín del Príncipe. http://patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **91-891-07-40.** Joint admission with Palacio Real 9€ adults, 4€ students and children 16 and under. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–6pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–5pm.

Jardín de la Isla ★ PARK/GARDEN After touring the Palacio Real, wander through the Garden of the Island. Spanish Impressionist painter Santiago Rusiñol captured its elusive quality on canvas, and one Spanish writer said that you walk here "as if softly lulled by a sweet 18th-century sonata." A number of fountains are remarkable: the "Ne Plus Ultra" fountain, the black-jasper fountain of

The Palacio Real, or Royal Palace, in Aranjuez.

Bacchus, the fountain of Apollo, and the ones honoring Neptune (god of the sea) and Cybele (goddess of agriculture). You may also stroll through Jardín del Parterre, located in front of the palace; it's much better kept than the Garden of the Island, but not as romantic.

Directly northwest of the Palacio Real. No phone. Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 8am–8:30pm; Oct–Mar daily 8am–6:30pm.

Palacio Real ★★ PALACE As you enter a cobblestone courtyard, you can tell just by the size of the palace that it's going to be spectacular. Fernando and Isabel, Felipe II, Felipe V, and Carlos III all spent time here. The structure you see today dates from 1778, an opulent palace built to replace the previous buildings, which were destroyed in a conflagration. The salons show the over-the-top tastes of some of Spain's monarchs, with room after room of royal extravagance. Many styles are blended: Spanish, Italian, Moorish, and French. And, of course, no royal palace would be complete without a room reflecting the rage for chinoiserie that once swept over Europe. The **Porcelain Salon** is also of special interest. A guide (bilingual) conducts you through the huge complex (a tip is expected).

Plaza Palacio. http://patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **91-891-07-40.** Joint admission with Casa del Labrador 9€ adults, 4€ students and children 16 and under. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–8pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Bus: Routes from the rail station converge at the square and gardens at the westernmost edge of the palace.

Where to Eat

Casa José ★ SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL Set near Town Hall and Iglesia San Antonio, this well-managed restaurant occupies two ground-floor rooms of a 300-year-old house in the heart of town. It is the premier restaurant of the entire area, and local gastronomes drive for miles to dine here. Look for a menu of fresh local ingredients that changes at least four times a year, with an emphasis on pork, veal, chicken, and even fish shipped in from the coast. The braised lamb chops in a fresh tomato-and-cilantro sauce are spectacular—Aranjuez is known for its superb spring lamb. The grilled hake (*merluza*) is prepared in a wonderfully Moorish style with almonds and saffron.

Calle de Abastos 32. www.casajose.es. ☎ **91-891-14-88.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–29€; fixed-price menu 58€–68€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Closed Aug.

El Rana Verde SPANISH “The Green Frog” lies just east of the Royal Palace, next to a small bridge spanning the Tagus. As in all the restaurants of Aranjuez, asparagus is a special feature. Game, particularly partridge, quail, and pigeon, is a good choice in season, as is fish, including fried hake and fried sole. Strawberries are served with sugar, orange juice, or ice cream. Opened in 1905 by Tomás Díaz Heredero, El Rana Verde is owned and run by a third-generation member of his family, Joaquin Col, who has decorated it in 1920s style. The restaurant looks like a summer house, with a high-beamed ceiling and soft drooping ferns. The best tables overlook the river.

Plaza Santiago Rusiñol s/n. www.elranaverde.com. ☎ **91-891-13-25.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–23€; fixed-price menu 18€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 9am–11pm.

Restaurante de la Calle ★ 🎁 SPANISH Chef Martin Berasategui boasts that if you aren’t already a serious foodie, you will be after dining in his simple but sublime dining room. The decor may be simple but the food is not. The chef works in collaboration with a “gastro-botanist,” Santiago Orts. As such, some of his produce can be rather exotic. He mates candylike fresh dates with intensely gamey squab breast. Everything on the menu seems to reflect the chef’s imagination, even a citrus “caviar” (actually the innards of an Australian finger lime piled atop fresh, briny oysters).

Antigua Carretera de Andalucía 85. www.restaurantedelacalle.com. ☎ **91-891-08-07.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–55€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 7pm–midnight.

Where to Stay

Hostal Castilla 🏷 On one of the town’s main streets north of the Palacio Real and gardens, the Castilla consists of the ground floor and part of the first floor of a well-preserved early-18th-century house. Most of the guest rooms overlook a courtyard with a fountain and flowers. There are excellent restaurants nearby, and the *hostal* has an arrangement with a neighboring bar to provide guests with an inexpensive lunch. This is a good location from which to explore either Madrid or Toledo on a day trip. Parking is available along the street.

Carretera Andalucía 98, 28300 Aranjuez. www.hostalesaranjuez.com. ☎ **91-891-26-27.** Fax 91-891-61-33. 19 units. 70€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (in some; free).

NH Principe de la Paz ★ Standing on the south side of the Palacio Real, the hotel occupies a building dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. At one time, it was the intended residential palace of Manuel Godoy, who was the lover of Carlos IV’s queen (see Casa del Labrador, p. 163). The original building was never completed, but its entrance forms the main reception room of the hotel today. Lying only 1km (⅔ mile) from the train station, the hotel offers midsize bedrooms that are attractively and comfortably furnished.

Calle San Antonio 22, 28300 Aranjuez. www.nh-hotels.com. ☎ **91-809-92-22.** Fax 91-892-59-99. 86 units. 70€–120€ double; 130€–202€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

SAN LORENZO DE EL ESCORIAL ★★

48km (30 miles) W of Madrid, 52km (32 miles) SE of Segovia

Aside from Toledo, more travelers make the excursion from Madrid to the austere royal monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial than any other attraction near the capital. Felipe II ordered the construction of this granite-and-slate behemoth in 1563, 2 years after he moved his capital to Madrid. Once the haunt of aristocratic Spaniards, El Escorial is now something of a summer getaway from the heat of Madrid. The town of San Lorenzo, frankly, does not offer much beyond the appeal of its climate. But because of the monastery's size, you might decide to spend a night in the town. San Lorenzo can be used as a base for driving visits to Segovia and Ávila, the royal palace at La Granja, and El Valle de Los Caídos.

Essentials

GETTING THERE More than two dozen *Cercanía* **commuter trains** depart daily from Madrid's Atocha, Nuevos Ministerios, Chamartín, and Recoletos railway stations. During the summer extra coaches are added. For schedules and information, call ✆ **90-232-03-20,** or visit www.renfe.es. A one-way fare costs 4.50€, and trip time is a little more than 1 hour.

The railway station is about a mile outside town along Carretera Estación. The Herranz bus company meets all arriving trains to shuttle passengers to and from Plaza Virgen de Gracia, about a block east of the monastery's entrance.

Empresa Herranz, Calle Del Rey 27, in El Escorial (✆ **91-890-19-15**), runs some 50 **buses** per day back and forth between Madrid and El Escorial. On Sunday, service is curtailed to 10 buses. Trip time is an hour, and the one-way fare is 6€. The same company runs one bus a day to **El Valle de los Caídos (The Valley of the Fallen).** It leaves El Escorial at 3:15pm with a return at 5:30pm. The 15-minute ride costs 11€ round-trip.

If you're driving, follow the N-VI highway (marked on some maps as A-6) from the northwest perimeter of Madrid toward Lugo, A Coruña, and San Lorenzo de El Escorial. After about a half-hour, fork left onto the C-505 heading toward San Lorenzo de El Escorial. Driving time from Madrid is about an hour.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Calle Grimaldi 4 (www.sanlorenzoturismo.org; ✆ **91-890-53-13**), is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 3 to 6pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring San Lorenzo de El Escorial

El Valle de los Caídos (The Valley of the Fallen) MONUMENT/MEMORIAL This is Franco's El Escorial, an architectural marvel that took 2 decades to complete, ostensibly dedicated to those who died in the Spanish Civil War but felt by many Spaniards to be a symbol of Franco's egotistical overreach. A gargantuan cross nearly 150m (492 ft.) high dominates the Rock of Nava, a peak of the Guadarrama Mountains. Directly under the cross is a basilica with a mosaic vault, completed in 1959. When José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Falange party and a Nationalist hero, was buried at El Escorial, many people, especially influential monarchists, protested that he was not a royal. Infuriated,

El Valle de los Caídos.

Franco decided to erect another monument—this one. Originally it was slated to honor the dead on the Nationalist side only, but the intervention of several parties led to a decision to include all the *caídos* (fallen). In time, the mausoleum claimed Franco as well; his body was interred behind the high altar.

A funicular runs from near the basilica entrance to the base of the gigantic cross on the mountaintop (where there's a superb view). The fare is 1.50€ one-way, 2.50€ round-trip; ride hours are daily from 10:30am to 6pm. On the other side of the mountain is a Benedictine monastery that has sometimes been dubbed "the Hilton of monasteries" because of its seeming luxury.

Carretere de Guadarrama. http://patrimonionacional.es. ☎ **91-890-56-11.** Admission 5€ adults, 2.50€ students and children 16 and under. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–6pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. By bus: Tour buses from Madrid usually include an excursion to the Valley of the Fallen on their 1-day trips to El Escorial. By car, drive to the valley entrance, about 8km (5 miles) north of El Escorial in the heart of the Guadarrama Mountains. Once here, drive 6km (3¾ miles) west along a wooded road to the underground basilica.

Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial ★★★ PALACE This huge granite fortress houses a wealth of paintings and tapestries and serves as the burial place for Spanish kings. Intimidating both inside and out because of its sheer size and institutional look, El Escorial took 21 years to complete—a remarkably short time considering the building's bulk and the primitive construction methods of the day. After the death of the original architect, Juan Bautista de Toledo, the structure was completed by Juan de Herrera, considered by many the greatest architect of Renaissance Spain.

Felipe II, who collected many of the paintings exhibited here in the **New Museums ★★**, did not care for El Greco but favored Titian instead. Still, you'll find El Greco's *The Martyrdom of St. Maurice* (rescued from storage) and also his *St. Peter.* Other superb works include Titian's *Last Supper* and Velázquez's *The Tunic of Joseph.*

The **Royal Library ★★** houses a priceless collection of 60,000 volumes—one of the most significant in the world. The displays range from the handwriting of St. Teresa to medieval instructions on playing chess. See, in particular, the Muslim codices and a Gothic *Cantigas* from the 13th-century reign of Alfonso X ("the Wise").

The monastery-fortress of El Escorial.

You can also visit the **Felipe II Apartments** ★★; they are strictly monastic, and Felipe called them the "cell for my humble self" in this "palace for God." Felipe became a religious fanatic and requested that his bedroom be erected overlooking the altar of the 90m-high (295-ft.) basilica, which has four organs and a dome based on Michelangelo's drawings for St. Peter's. The choir contains a crucifix by Cellini. The walls of the simple **Throne Room** hold many ancient maps. **The Apartments of the Bourbon Kings** are lavishly decorated, in contrast to Felipe's preference for the ascetic.

Under the church altar, you find one of the most regal mausoleums in the world, the **Royal Pantheon** ★★★, where most of Spain's monarchs from Carlos I to Alfonso XII, including Felipe II, are buried. In 1993, Don Juan de Borbón, the count of Barcelona and the father of King Juan Carlos (Franco passed over the count and never allowed him to ascend the throne), was interred nearby. On a lower floor is the "Wedding Cake" tomb for children.

Allow at least 3 hours for a visit. The guided tour doesn't take you to all the sites, but you are free to explore on your own afterward.

Calle Juan de Borbón s/n. http://patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **91-890-59-03.** Comprehensive ticket 10€ adults, 5€ students and children; audio guide 4€. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–6pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–5pm.

Where to Eat

Charolés SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL The thick, solid walls of this establishment date, according to its managers, "from the monastic age"—and probably predate the town's larger and better-known monastery of El Escorial. The restaurant within was established around 1980 and has been one of the best in town ever since, which isn't saying a lot. The food is competent and well prepared, but is far too broad and unfocused. Best bets include local baby lamb chops, a pie of fresh vegetables with prawns, and a strawberry tart (if it's the season). The outdoor terrace, surrounded by flowers, is a good choice for dining in nice weather.

Calle Floridablanca 24. ✆ **91-890-59-75.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–24€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight.

Mesón de la Cueva CASTILIAN Founded in 1768, this restaurant is only a short walk from the monastery. A *mesón típico* (typical Spanish bar) built around an enclosed courtyard, "the Cave" is an atmospheric venue with such accents as stained-glass windows, antique chests, an 18th-century bullfighting collage, faded engravings, paneled doors, and iron balconies. The cooking is literally all over the place, offering as house specialties the paella of Valencia, the pork-and-bean dish of Asturias known as *fabada asturiana,* and the Navarra specialty of fresh trout broiled in butter. The menu's most expensive items are Segovian roast suckling pig and roast lamb (tender inside, crisp outside). La Cueva's *tasca* (tapas bar), through a separate doorway off the courtyard, is filled with Castilians quaffing their favorite before-dinner drinks.

San Antón 4. www.mesonlacueva.com. ☎ **91-890-15-16.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–20€; fixed-price menus 18€–30€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 9–11pm.

Entertainment & Nightlife

No longer quite as dead as during the long Franco era, San Lorenzo stays awake after dark, fueled by the throngs of young people who pack the bars and taverns, especially those along Calle Rey and Calle Floridablanca.

Typically Spanish is the hard-drinking **Regina Piano Bar,** Floridablanca 2 (www.reginapianobar.com; ☎ **91-890-68-43**), which, contrary to its name, hosts cabaret, Latin dance, and other forms of variety entertainment.

Where to Stay

Hostal Cristina 🏷 An excellent budget choice, this hotel is run by the Delgado family, who opened it in the mid-1980s. It doesn't pretend to compete with the comfort and amenities of the Victoria Palace (see below), but it has its devotees. Some 45m (148 ft.) from the monastery, it stands in the center of town, offering clean and comfortable but simply furnished guest rooms. The beds have firm mattresses, and units range from small to medium in size. The helpful staff will direct you to the small garden.

Juan de Toledo 6, 28200 San Lorenzo de El Escorial. www.hostalcristina.es. ☎ **91-890-19-61.** Fax 91-890-12-04. 16 units. 47€–53€ double; 53€–59€ triple. DC, MC, V. Parking available on street. **Amenities:** Lounge. *In room:* TV.

Hotel Botánico ★ True to its name, this hotel stands in a lovely manicured garden of both indigenous and exotic shrubbery. Although the building is traditionally Castilian, the decor seems vaguely alpine, with wood paneling and beams in the reception rooms. The clean, well-lit units are large and comfortable.

Calle Timoteo Padros 16, 28200 San Lorenzo de El Escorial. www.botanicohotel.com. ☎ **91-890-78-79.** Fax 91-890-81-58. 20 units. 86€–165€ double; 158€–235€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Victoria Palace ★ 🏷 The Victoria Palace, with its view of El Escorial, is a traditional establishment that has been modernized without losing its original style and comfort. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens and has an outdoor swimming pool. The good-size guest rooms (some with private terraces) are well furnished and maintained. The rates are a bargain for a government-rated four-star hotel.

Calle Juan de Toledo 4, 28200 San Lorenzo de El Escorial. www.nh-hoteles.es. ✆ **91-896-98-90.** Fax 91-896-98-96. 87 units. 60€–150€ double; 115€–200€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

SEGOVIA ★★★

87km (54 miles) NW of Madrid, 68km (42 miles) NE of Ávila

From the 166 iconic arches of its Roman Aqueduct on one end of the city to the towering and iconic Alcázar on the other, Segovia is one of the most dramatic small cities in Spain. Built on a single loaf-shaped rock, it is studded with small attractions and engaging neighborhoods. Its narrow, winding streets have to be covered on foot to visit the Romanesque churches, early Renaissance palaces, and medieval Judería.

Segovia lies on the slope of the Guadarrama Mountains, where the Eresma and Clamores rivers converge. This ancient city is located in the center of the most castle-rich part of Castilla. Isabel herself was proclaimed queen of Castilla here in 1474. It is a good base for seeing other parts of Castilla, especially nearby Ávila.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Seventeen **trains** leave Madrid every day. Five take 90 minutes to reach Segovia, but the others arrive in less than a half-hour. Once in Segovia, board bus no. 3, departing every quarter-hour for the Plaza Mayor. The five slow commuter trains that leave from Chamartín first travel through Atocha station, making it closer to some travelers' hotels. A one-way rail fare on the slow train costs 6€, while the high-speed train from Atocha costs 10€ to 13€. The commuter rail station at Segovia is on Paseo Obispo Quesada s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), a 20-minute walk southeast of the town center. The high-speed train arrives at Segovia-Guiomar, 4km (2½ miles) from downtown but served every 15 minutes by bus no. 11 to the Aqueduct.

Buses arrive and depart from **Estacionamiento Municipal de Autobuses,** Paseo de Ezequiel González 10 (✆ **92-142-77-06**), near the corner of Avenida Fernández Ladreda and the steeply sloping Paseo Conde de Sepúlveda. There are 20 to 35 buses a day to and from Madrid (which depart from Paseo de la Florida 11; Metro: Norte), and about 4 a day traveling between Ávila and Segovia. One-way tickets from Madrid cost 8€.

If you're driving, take the N-VI (on some maps it's known as the A-6), in the direction of A Coruña, northwest from Madrid, toward León and Lugo. At the junction with Rte. 110 (signposted SEGOVIA), turn northeast (AP-61 or N-603).

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Plaza Mayor 10 (www.turismodesegovia.com; ✆ **92-146-03-34**), is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm.

Exploring Segovia

You'll find the best **shopping** in the Old City between the Roman aqueduct, the cathedral, and the Alcázar. Head especially for **Calle de Juan Bravo, Calle Daoiz,** and **Calle Marqués del Arco.** Thursday is market day on Plaza Mayor.

Alcázar de Segovia ★ ☺ CASTLE View the Alcázar first from below, at the junction of the Clamores and Eresma rivers. It is on the west side of Segovia, so you may not spot it when you approach the city. But that's part of the surprise. For an actual tour, you'll have to enter from the city side.

Parts of the castle date from the 12th century, but a large segment containing its Moorish ceilings was destroyed by fire in 1862 and subsequent reconstruction made it into a fairy-tale version of the original. Royal romance is associated with the Alcázar. Isabel first met Fernando here, and today you can see a facsimile of her dank bedroom. Once married, she wasn't foolish enough to surrender her royal rights, as replicas of the thrones attest—both are equally proportioned. Felipe II married his fourth wife, Anne of Austria, here as well.

Walk the battlements of this once-impregnable castle, from which its occupants hurled boiling oil onto the enemy below. Ascend the hazardous stairs of the tower, originally built by Isabel's father as a prison, for a panoramic view of Segovia.

Plaza de la Reina Victoria Eugenia. www.alcazardesegovia.com. ☎ **92-146-07-59.** Admission 4.50€ adults, 3€ children 6–16, free for children 5 and under. Apr–Sept daily 10am–7pm; Oct Sun–Thurs 10am–6pm, Fri–Sat 10am–7pm; Nov–Mar daily 10am–6pm. Bus: 3. Take Calle Vallejo, Calle de Velarde, Calle de Daoiz, or Paseo de Ronda.

Cabildo Catedral de Segovia ★ CATHEDRAL Constructed between 1515 and 1558, this is the last Gothic cathedral built in Spain. Fronting the historic Plaza Mayor, it stands on the spot where Isabel I was proclaimed queen of Castilla. Affectionately called *la dama de las catedrales,* it contains numerous treasures, such as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel (created by the flamboyant Churriguera), stained-glass windows, elaborately carved choir stalls, and 16th- and 17th-century paintings, including a reredos portraying the deposition of Christ from the cross by Juan de Juni. The **cloisters** ★ are older than the cathedral, dating from an earlier church that was destroyed in the 16th-century revolt of

The spire of the Cabildo Catedral de Segovia.

Castilian nobles against the crown. Inside the cathedral museum you'll find jewelry, paintings, and a collection of rare antique manuscripts.

Plaza Catedral. Marqués del Arco, s/n. ✆ **92-146-22-05.** Admission to cathedral, cloisters, museum, and chapel room 3€ adults, free for children 13 and under. Late Mar to early Oct daily 9:30am–6:30pm; mid-Oct to mid-Mar daily 9:30am–5:30pm. Free admission to cathedral Sun 9am–1:15pm.

Iglesia de la Vera Cruz 🎁 CHURCH Built in either the 11th or the 12th century by the Knights Templar, this is the most fascinating Romanesque church in Segovia. It stands in isolation, well outside the walls of the Old Town at a distance from the Alcázar. Its unusual 12-sided design is believed to have been copied from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Inside you'll find a two-floor inner temple where the knights conducted nightlong vigils as part of their initiation rites.

Carretera de Zamarramala. ✆ **92-143-14-75.** Admission 2€. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10:30am–1:30pm and 3:30–7pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10:30am–1:30pm and 3:30–6pm. Closed Nov.

Monasterio Santa María del Parral ★ MONASTERY The restored "Monastery of the Grape" was established for the Hieronymites by Enrique IV, the king of Castilla (1425–74) known as "the Impotent," half brother to Isabel I. The monastery lies across the Eresma River about a half-mile north of the city. The church is a medley of styles and decoration—mainly Gothic, Renaissance, and Plateresque. The facade was never completed, and the monastery itself was abandoned when religious orders were suppressed in 1835. Today, it's been restored and is once again the domain of the Jerónimos, Hieronymite priests and brothers. Inside, a robed monk will show you the order's treasures, including a polychrome altarpiece and the alabaster tombs of the marquis of Villena and his wife—all the work of Juan Rodríguez.

Calle del Marqués de Villena (across the Eresma River). ✆ **92-143-12-98.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–12:30pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun 10–11:30am and 4–6:30pm. Take Ronda de Santa Lucía, cross the Eresma River, and head down Calle del Marqués de Villena.

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Esteban Vicente ART MUSEUM Spanish-born abstract-expressionist artist Esteban Vicente called himself "an American painter, with very deep and loving Spanish roots." A permanent collection of some 142 of his works is installed in this renovated 15th-century palace. Born in a small town outside Segovia in 1903, Vicente remained in Spain until 1927, eventually residing in New York, where he had a knack for attaching himself to the periphery of several schools of abstract art. Until his death in 2001, he was one of the last surviving members of the New York School, whose members included Rothko, de Kooning, and Pollock. Vicente's paintings and collages convey his sense of structure and feelings of luminous serenity with colors of astonishing vibrancy, brilliance, and range. Some of his other paintings are in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney, all in New York.

Plazuela de las Bellas Artes. www.museoestebanvicente.es. ✆ **92-146-20-10.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ seniors and students, free for children 11 and under; free for all Thurs. Tues–Wed 11am–2pm and 4–7pm; Thurs–Fri 11am–2pm and 4–8pm; Sat–Sun 11am–8pm.

Roman Aqueduct (Acueducto Romano) ★★★ ARCHITECTURE This architectural marvel was built by the Romans nearly 2,000 years ago. Constructed of mortarless granite, it consists of 118 arches, and in one two-tiered section it

Segovia's ancient Acueducto Romano.

soars 29m (95 ft.) to its highest point. The Spanish call it El Puente. It spans the Plaza del Azoguejo, the old market square, stretching nearly 720m (2,362 ft.). When the Moors took Segovia in 1072, they destroyed 36 arches, which were later rebuilt under Fernando and Isabel in 1484.

Plaza del Azoguejo.

Where to Eat

El Bernardino CASTILIAN For an atmospheric meal of very traditional Castilian food, walk 3 minutes west from the aqueduct to this bright *asador,* or grill house. Lanterns hang from beamed ceilings, and the view over the red-tile rooftops of the city is delightful. There is also a terrace for warm-weather outdoor dining. The menu of the day might well offer roast veal with potatoes, flan or ice cream, plus bread and wine. Begin your meal with the region's classic *sopa castellana* (soup made with ham, sausage, bread, egg, and garlic). The roasts are very good, including roast chicken, a quarter of roast lamb, and wood-roasted suckling lamb.

Cervantes 2. www.elbernardino.com. ✆ **92-146-24-77.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–18€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8–11pm.

José María Restaurante ★★★ CASTILIAN This culinary landmark is one of Segovia's great restaurants that excels at the two main regional specialties, *cordero lechal asado* (roast suckling lamb) and *cochinillo asado* (roast suckling pig). You can choose among five different dining rooms, each decorated in the typical *castellano* style. The fame of José María means that you'll be seated with tourists as well as locals, but be assured that this is the real deal. The waitstaff are friendly and helpful in guiding you through the menu and wine *carte.* The chef is hardly bound by tradition, and he readily invents light, modern dishes to suit the produce of the season.

Cronista Lecea 11. www.rtejosemaria.com. ✆ **92-146-11-11.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 7–11pm.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

Hotel Palacio San Facundo ★★ Extreme comfort with a modern-designer take on Renaissance style make this historic-zone hotel the classiest stay in

Segovia. Built as a convent, converted to a private palace in the 1500s, and then to a boutique hotel in the 21st century, it carries its history well. Rooms have either wrought-iron or leather padded headboards and bathroom sinks of slumped glass slabs. Sizes vary a bit, of course. The central cloister, now covered with glass, functions as a lobby and bar-cafeteria.

Plaza San Facundo 4, 40001 Segovia. www.hotelpalaciosanfacundo.com. ☎ **92-146-30-61.** Fax 92-146-30-62. 50 units. 90€–110€ double; 200€–240€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Internet (free).

MODERATE

Hostería Ayala Berganza ★★ 🎁 Once home to one of Spain's most famous painters, Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945), this converted inn now provides some of the most atmospheric lodging in Castilla. Some accommodations are in the original 15th-century Castilian palace, which has been declared a historic monument. The rest of the rooms are in a modern structure completed in 1998. The hotel lies just outside the ramparts of central Segovia, a 5-minute walk to the heart of town and the cathedral. Its convenient location right next to the Romanesque church of San Millán means you are only a few minutes' walk from the aqueduct. Care and attention went into the modern guest rooms and the two suites; each is individually decorated.

Calle Carretas 5, 40001 Segovia. www.hosteriaayalaberganza.com. ☎ **92-146-04-48.** Fax 92-146-23-77. 17 units. 65€–165€ double; 155€–245€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Eurostars Plaza Acueducto ★ This contemporary deluxe business hotel offers bargain rates on stylish large rooms. Located almost in the shadow of the Roman aqueduct, it is perfectly situated for strolling into the new city or enjoying the nightlife of Plaza Azoguejo.

Av. Padre Claret 2–4, 40001, Segovia. www.eurostarshotels.com. ☎ **921-41-34-03.** 72 units. 65€–145€ double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Infanta Isabel Grand in a rather Victorian fashion, this hotel overlooking the central square only a short distance from the hulking cathedral was named after the daughter of Isabel II. (She was the great-great-aunt of the present king.) This *infanta* would stay here when she was on her way to the nearby summer palace of La Granja. The present owners have modernized the interior considerably, but the trappings of an earlier era, including the grand staircase, remain. Each room is decorated in its own style, with an eye to well-padded comfort.

Plaza Mayor, 40001 Segovia. www.hotelinfantaisabel.com. ☎ **92-146-13-00.** Fax 92-146-22-17. 39 units. 60€–129€ double standard; 65€–130€ double superior; 156€–208€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Los Arcos This concrete-and-glass five-story structure opened in 1987. Well run and modern, it attracts the business traveler, but tourists frequent the place in droves as well. Guest rooms are generally spacious but are furnished in a generic way that's bland, except for the beautiful rug-dotted parquet floors.

There are built-in furnishings and tiny bathrooms. The rooms are well kept, with good beds, although some furnishings look worn.

Paseo de Ezequiel González 26, 40002 Segovia. www.hotellosarcos.com. ✆ **92-143-74-62.** Fax 92-142-81-61. 60 units. 60€–130€ double; 90€–165€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 11€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Los Linajes ★ In the historic district of San Esteban at the northern edge of the Old Town stands this former home of a Segovian noble family. While the facade dates from the 11th century, the interior is modern, except for some Castilian decorations. Guest rooms, in a range of sizes and shapes, are comfortable, with fine beds and tidily kept tiled bathrooms. Los Linajes has gardens and patios where guests can enjoy a panoramic view over the city—but it's located downhill from many of the attractions.

Doctor Velasco 9, 40003 Segovia. www.loslinajes.com. ✆ **92-146-04-75.** Fax 92-146-04-79. 60 units. 50€–110€ double; 124€–142€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. Bus: 1. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Las Sirenas Standing since 1950 on the most charming old plaza in Segovia opposite the San Martín church, this hotel has been renovated several times. Modest and well maintained, it is decorated in a conservative style. Each small room contains simple, functional furniture, good beds, and a neatly kept bathroom. Breakfast is the only meal served, but the staff at the reception desk can direct guests to nearby cafes and *tascas.*

Juan Bravo 30, 40001 Segovia. www.hotelsirenas.com. ✆ **92-146-26-63.** Fax 92-146-26-57. 39 units. 66€–77€ double; 87€–98€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 15€. **Amenities:** Bar; exercise room; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Just head for **Plaza Mayor, Plaza Azoguejo,** or busy **Calle Infanta Isabel** (which runs into Plaza Azoguejo). You're sure to find some fun in the scattering of simple bars and cafes that grow more crowded at night as the days grow hotter. One of the most popular bars is **Santana,** Infanta Isabel 18 (www.barsantana.com; ✆ **92-146-35-64**), which rocks in the late evening and serves tapas Thursday to Tuesday until midnight.

A Side Trip to La Granja

To reach La Granja, 11km (6¾ miles) southeast of Segovia, you can take a 20-minute bus ride from the center of the city. Six to 10 buses a day leave from Paseo Conde de Sepúlveda at Avenida Fernández Ladreda. A one-way fare costs 1.15€. For information, call ✆ **90-211-96-99.**

Palacio Real de La Granja de San Ildefonso PALACE La Granja de San Ildefonso was the summer palace of the Bourbon kings of Spain, who attempted to replicate the grandeur of Versailles in the province of Segovia. The palace was built in the first part of the 18th century. Inside you'll find valuable antiques (many in Empire style), paintings, and a remarkable collection of Flemish tapestries, as well as tapestries based on Goya cartoons from the Royal Factory in Madrid. Set against the snowcapped Sierra de Guadarrama, the slate-roofed palace dominates the village that grew up around it (a summer resort these days).

The builder of La Granja was Felipe V, grandson of Louis XIV and the first Bourbon king of Spain. (His body, along with that of his second queen, Isabel de Fernesio, is interred in a mausoleum in the Collegiate Church.) Felipe V was born at Versailles on December 19, 1683, which may explain why he wanted to re-create that atmosphere at Segovia.

At one time, a farm stood on the grounds now occupied by the palace—hence its incongruous name, *la granja,* meaning "the farm." Most visitors seem to find a stroll through the **gardens,** which retain their 18th-century design, a highlight of the visit, so allow adequate time. The fountain statuary is a riot of cavorting gods and nymphs hiding indiscretions. The gardens are studded with chestnuts and elms.

Plaza de España 17, San Ildefonso 40100 (Segovia). http://patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **92-147-00-19.** Admission 9€ adults, 4€ students and children 5–14, free for children 4 and under. Apr–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–8pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–6pm.

ALCALÁ DE HENARES

29km (18 miles) E of Madrid

History wasn't been kind to this ancient town, which once flourished with colleges, monasteries, and palaces. When a university was founded here in the 15th century, Alcalá became a cultural and intellectual center. Europe's first polyglot Bible (supposedly with footnotes in the original Greek and Hebrew) was published here in 1517, but the town declined during the 1800s when the university moved to Madrid. Today, Alcalá has created a new identity as one of the main centers of North American academics in Spain, cooperating with the Fulbright Commission, Michigan State University, and Madrid's Washington Irving Center. Overall, the city has taken on new life. Commuters have turned it into a virtual suburb, dubbing it "the bedroom of Madrid."

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Trains** travel from Madrid to Alcalá de Henares seven times per day. Trains depart From Madrid's Chamartín station. A one-way fare from Madrid to Alcalá De Henares costs 3€ to 10€, depending on the train. Trip time is 30 minutes. The train station (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) in Alcalá is at Paseo Estación.

Buses from Madrid depart from Av. América 18 (Metro: América) every 15 minutes. A one-way fare is 4€. Bus service is provided by Continental, and the Alcalá bus station is on Av. Guadalajara 36 (✆ **90-242-22-42**), 2 blocks past Calle Libreros.

Alcalá lies adjacent to the main national highway (N-II), connecting Madrid with eastern Spain. As you leave central Madrid, follow signs for Barajas Airport and Barcelona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Callejón de Santa María 1 (www.turismoalcala.com; ✆ **91-889-26-94**), provides a map showing all the local attractions. It is open daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6:30pm (until 7:30pm July–Sept). It is closed on Monday in July and August.

Exploring Alcalá de Henares

Capilla de San Ildefonso CHURCH Next door to the Colegio (see below) is the Capilla de San Ildefonso, the 15th-century chapel of the old university. It also houses the Italian marble tomb of Cardinal Cisneros, the founder of the original university. This chapel also has an *artesonado* (artisan's) ceiling and intricately stuccoed walls.

Plaza San Diego. ✆ **91-885-41-22** or 91-883-43-84. Admission included in tour of Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso. Mon–Fri 11am–1pm and 5–7pm; Sat–Sun 11am–2pm and 5–7:30pm.

Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso HISTORIC SITE Adjacent to Plaza de Cervantes (the main square) is the Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso, where Lope de Vega and other famous Spaniards studied. You can see some of their names engraved on plaques in the examination room. The old university's Plateresque **facade** ★ dates from 1543. From here you can walk across the Patio of Saint Thomas (from 1662) and the Patio of the Philosophers to reach the Patio of the Three Languages (from 1557), where Greek, Latin, and Hebrew were once taught. The **Paraninfo** (great hall or old examination room) has a Mudéjar carved-panel ceiling and is now used for special events. The Paraninfo is entered through a restaurant, **Hostería del Estudiante** (see below).

Plaza San Diego. ✆ **91-883-43-84.** Admission 2.50€. Tours (mandatory; in Spanish or English) Mon–Fri on the hour 11am–1pm and 5–7pm; Sat–Sun on the half-hour 11am–2pm and 5–7:30pm.

El Museo Casa Natal de Cervantes HISTORIC HOME Visitors come to see the birthplace of Spain's literary giant Miguel de Cervantes, the creator of *Don Quixote,* who may have been born here in 1547. This 16th-century Castilian house was reconstructed in 1956 around a beautiful little courtyard, which has a wooden gallery supported by pillars with Renaissance-style capitals, plus an old well, giving a good picture of middle-class life in the 16th century. The house contains many Cervantes manuscripts and, of course, copies of *Don Quixote,* one of the world's most widely published books (available here in many languages).

Facade of the Colegio Mayor de San Ildefonso.

Calle Mayor 48. www.museo-casa-natal-cervantes.org. ✆ **91-889-96-54.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Closed Jan 1 and 6 and Dec 24, 25, and 31.

Where to Eat

Hostería del Estudiante ★ CASTILIAN Located within the university complex, this remarkable 1510 building is an attraction in its own right. It opened as a restaurant in 1929, and its typically Castilian recipes haven't been altered since. In the cooler months, if you arrive early, you can lounge in front of a 4.5m (15-ft.) open fireplace. Oil lamps hang from the ceiling, pigskins are filled with local wine, and rope-covered chairs and high-backed carved settees capture the spirit of the past. Run by the Spanish *parador* system, the restaurant offers a tasty (and huge) three-course fixed-price lunch or dinner featuring such regional specialties as roast suckling lamb, *huevos comigos* (three eggs fried with mushrooms), and Navarra-style trout. For dessert, try the cheese of La Mancha.

Calle Colegios 3. www.parador.es. ✆ **91-888-03-30.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–28€; fixed-price menu 31€–33€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9–11pm; Sun 1–10:30pm. Closed Aug.

CHINCHÓN ★

52km (32 miles) SE of Madrid, 26km (16 miles) NE of Aranjuez

Chinchón is its own main attraction, as it looks and feels like a movie set of old-time Castilla. The ostensible main attraction, however, is the ***cuevas*** **(caves),** where Anís de Chinchón, an aniseed liqueur, is manufactured. You can buy bottles of the liqueur in Plaza Mayor, at the center of town. **Plaza Mayor** ★★, the town's main square, is the architectural highlight of Chinchón. Dominated by its church, the arcaded square is surrounded by three-story frame houses with wooden balconies. A few bullfights are presented on the square in the summer, but the arcades are full all the time with tables and chairs for the day-trippers to sit, eat, and drink (not that there's anything wrong with that).

Wander along the town's steep and narrow streets, past houses with large bays and spacious carriage ways. Although closed to the public, the 15th-century **Chinchón Castle,** seat of the *conde* (count) of Chinchón, can be viewed from outside. The most interesting church, **Nuestra Señora de la Asunción,** dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, contains a painting by Goya.

GETTING THERE Chinchón is most often visited from Aranjuez (p. 162), a 30-minute ride away. **Buses** run seven times a day (Mon–Fri) from Aranjuez, leaving from Calle La Fanta. Schedules tend to be erratic, so call for information (✆ **90-219-87-88**). The one-way fare is 3€.

To drive, head from Alcalá to Toledo, bypassing Madrid by taking the C-300 in a southwesterly arc around the capital. About halfway there, follow signs to cuevas de Chinchón. Another option is to take the E-901 southeast of Madrid toward Valencia, turning southwest at the turnoff for Chinchón.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Oficina de Información Turística Municipal** is at Plaza Mayor (www.ciudad-chinchon.com; ✆ **91-893-53-23**), open daily 10am to 7pm.

Where to Eat

Mesón Cuevas del Vino ★ SPANISH/CASTILIAN This establishment is known for its wine cellars, stocked with bottles you can sample at lunch or dinner. Hanging from the rafters are hams cured by the owners, along with flavorful homemade spiced sausages. Chunks of ham and sausage cooked in oil, plus olives and crunchy bread, are served. Your meal might begin with sliced *chorizo* (Spanish sausage); blood pudding; slices of La Mancha cheese; *sopa castellana* made with garlic, ham, and eggs; or thin-sliced cured ham. Main courses place heavy emphasis on the roast suckling lamb and pig that emerge crackling from a wood-burning oven. Desserts include flan; cookies coated in cinnamon and sugar; and liquefied sweetened almonds, presented in a soupy mixture in a bowl.

Benito Hortelano 13. www.cuevasdelvino.com. ✆ **91-894-02-06.** Reservations recommended on holidays. Main courses 14€–26€; *menú degustación* 38€. MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–5pm and 8–11pm; Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–8pm.

Where to Stay

Hotel Nuevo Chinchón 🏷 On the outskirts, this is one of the town's best addresses. In 1994, the owners invested lots of time and money in making it appear older and more nostalgic than it is. Low slung and modern from the outside, it contains small bedrooms whose headboards are painted in old-fashioned folkloric patterns. The overall effect is cozy, with a low-key charm.

Urbanización Nuevo Chinchón, Carretera a Titulcia, Km 1.5, 28370 Chinchón. www.hotelnuevochinchon.com. ✆ **91-894-05-44.** Fax 91-893-51-28. 17 units. 81€ double; 102€ triple; 113€ quad. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; 2 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Parador de Chinchón ★★ Set near the town center, this hotel lies within the carefully restored 17th-century walls of what was originally an Augustinian convent. After a stint as both a civic jail and a courthouse, it was transformed in 1972 into a government-run *parador,* and it's the best place to stay in town. A team of architects and designers converted it handsomely, with glass-walled hallways opening onto a stone-sided courtyard. The hotel has two bars and two dining halls. Severely dignified rooms still manage to convey their ecclesiastical origins. Rooms range from small to medium, each with a quality mattress and fine linen along with a well-maintained tiled bathroom.

Av. Generalísimo 1, 28370 Chinchón. www.parador.es. ✆ **91-894-08-36.** Fax 91-894-09-08. 38 units. 120€–173€ double; 190€–320€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking nearby. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

ÁVILA ★★

109km (68 miles) NW of Madrid, 67km (42 miles) SW of Segovia

The ancient city of Ávila is completely encircled by well-preserved 11th-century walls, which are among the most important medieval relics in Europe. The city has been declared a national landmark, and there is little wonder why. The walls aren't the only attraction, however. Ávila has several Romanesque churches, Gothic palaces, and a fortified cathedral. It is among some 80 cities designated by UNESCO as World Heritage sites.

Ávila's city walls.

Ávila's spirit and legend are most linked to St. Teresa, who was born here in 1515. This Carmelite nun spearheaded the Counter-Reformation in Spain and founded a number of convents. She experienced visions of the devil and angels piercing her heart with burning-hot lances and wrote some of Catholicism's most electrifying mystical literature. She was eventually imprisoned in Toledo. Many legends sprang up after her death, including the belief that a hand severed from her body could perform miracles. Finally, in 1622, she was declared a saint.

Note: Bring warm clothes if you're visiting in early spring.

Essentials

GETTING THERE More than two dozen **trains** leave daily from Madrid for Ávila, about a 1½- to 2-hour trip each way. All trains from Madrid to Ávila depart from Chamartín station. Tickets cost from about 6€ to 10€. The Ávila station is at Avenida José Antonio (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), 1.6km (1 mile) east of the Old City. You'll find taxis lined up in front of Ávila's railway station and at the more central Plaza Santa Teresa. For taxi information, call ✆ **92-035-35-45.**

Buses leave Madrid daily from Estación Sur de Autobuses at Calle Méndez Álvaro. In Ávila, the bus terminal (www.avanzabus.com; ✆ **90-202-00-52**) is at the corner of avenidas Madrid and Portugal, northeast of the center of town. A one-way ticket from Madrid costs 9€.

To drive here, exit Madrid at its northwest perimeter and head northwest on Highway N-VI (A-6) toward A Coruña, eventually forking southwest to Ávila. Driving time is around 1¼ hours.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Av. Madrid 39 (www.avilaturismo.com; ✆ **92-022-59-69**), is open daily 9am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. July to September it's open Monday to Thursday 9am to 8pm, and Friday and Saturday 9am to 9pm.

Exploring Ávila

Begun on orders of Alfonso VI as part of the general Reconquest of Spain from the Moors, the 11th-century **Murallas de Ávila (Walls of Ávila) ★★★**, built over Roman fortifications, took 9 years to complete. Averaging 10m (33 ft.) in height, they have 88 semicircular towers and more than 2,300 battlements. Of the nine gateways, the two most famous are the San Vicente and the Alcázar, both on the eastern side. In many respects, the walls are best viewed from the west. Whichever point of view you prefer, you can drive alongside the walls' entire length of 2km (1¼ miles). Better yet, you can walk the ramparts, looking eye to eye with storks nesting on rooftops and chimneys. The entry points are at the gates of Carnicerías, Alcázar, and Ronda Vieja (✆ **92-025-50-88**). They are open April to October 15 daily 10am to 8pm, October 16 through March daily 11am to 6pm; admission is 4€. Be aware that there are many rough stone steps and some tricky footing, and despite railings, some fully exposed heights.

Basílica de San Vicente ★★ CHURCH Outside the city walls, at the northeast corner of the medieval ramparts, this Romanesque-Gothic church in faded sandstone encompasses styles from the 12th to the 14th centuries. It consists of a huge nave and a trio of apses. The eternal struggle between good and evil is depicted on a cornice on the southern portal. The **western portal ★★**, dating from the 13th century, contains Romanesque carvings. Inside is the tomb of St. Vincent, martyred on this site in the 4th century. The tomb's medieval carvings, which depict his torture and subsequent martyrdom, are fascinating.

Plaza de San Vicente. ✆ **92-025-52-30.** Admission 1.60€. Daily 10am–1:30pm and 4–6:30pm.

Carmelitas Descalzas de San José (Barefoot Carmelites of St. Joseph) CONVENT Also known as the Convento de las Madres (Convent of the Mothers), this is the first convent founded by St. Teresa, who started the Reform of Carmel in 1562. There are two churches: a primitive one, where the first Carmelite nuns took the habit; and one built by Francisco de Mora, architect for Felipe III, after the saint's death. The museum displays many relics, including, of all things, St. Teresa's left clavicle, and a re-creation of her original cell.

Las Madres 4. ✆ **92-022-21-27.** Admission to museum 1.50€. Apr–Oct daily 10am–1:30pm and 4–7pm; Nov–Mar daily 10am–1:30pm and 3–6pm. From Plaza de Santa Teresa and its nearby Church of San Pedro, follow Calle del Duque de Alba for about 2 blocks.

Catedral del Salvador ★ CATHEDRAL Built into the old ramparts of Ávila, this cold, austere cathedral and fortress (begun in 1099) bridges the gap between the Romanesque and the Gothic and, as such, enjoys a certain distinction in Spanish architecture. One local writer compared it to a granite mountain. The unusual interior is built with a mottled red-and-white stone.

Like most European cathedrals, Ávila lost its purity of design through the years as new chapels and wings—one completely in the Renaissance mode—were added. A Dutch artist, Cornelius, designed the seats of the choir stalls, also in Renaissance style, and the principal chapel holds a reredos showing the life of Christ by Pedro Berruguete, Juan de Borgoña, and Santa Cruz. Behind the chapel is Vasco de Zarza's masterpiece: the tomb of Bishop Alonso de Madrigal—nicknamed "El Tostado" ("the Parched One") because of its brownish color. The cathedral museum contains a laminated gold ceiling, a 15th-century triptych, a copy of an El Greco painting, vestments, and 15th-century songbooks.

Plaza de la Catedral. ✆ **92-021-16-41.** Admission 4€ adults, free for children 9 and under. Apr–Oct Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–7pm, Sun noon–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–5pm.

Convento de Santa Teresa CONVENT This 17th-century convent and baroque church, 2 blocks southwest of Plaza de la Victoria, stands at the site of St. Teresa's birth. To the right of the convent, the tiny **Sala de Reliquias** exhibits some of her relics, including a finger from her right hand, the sole of one of her sandals, and a cord with which she flagellated herself.

Plaza de la Santa 2. ✆ **92-021-10-30** or 92-022-07-08. Admission 2€ (Sala de Reliquias free admission). Museum Nov–Mar daily 10am–1:30pm and 3:30–5:30pm; Apr–Oct Tues–Sun 10am–1:30pm and 3:30–5:30pm. Sala de Reliquias daily 9:30am–1:30pm and 3:30–7:30pm.

Where to Eat

El Molino de la Losa ★ ☺ CASTILIAN Within a 15-minute walk west of the town center, this restaurant consistently serves some of the most traditional food in town. It lies within a stately looking ocher-fronted building—once a 15th-century mill—that is adjacent to the historic bridge, Puente Río Adaja. Inside it has a trussed ceiling, thick walls, and elegantly rustic furnishings. The waitstaff may show a rather cool detachment, but you've come to eat, not be coddled. The house specialty is lamb roasted in a wood-fired medieval oven. Do make a point of trying the veal steaks, a specialty for which Ávila is known throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The kitchen also prepares some excellent fish dishes, especially hake (*merluza*). The restaurant garden has a small playground for children.

Bajada de la Losa 12. www.elmolinodelalosa.com. ✆ **92-021-11-01.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–4pm and 9–11pm.

Hospedería de Bracamonte SPANISH/CASTILIAN The kitchen here focuses on grills and old-fashioned roasts, many of which regular guests might remember fondly from childhood. Among them are tender roasted baby lamb with herbs and garlic; grilled pork and veal chops; roasted chicken; all manner of steaks, cutlets, and ribs; and the occasional seafood. Parts of the building are 400 years old and every effort was made in subsequent remodelings to replicate the original ceiling beams, rough-textured plaster, and artfully chiseled stone of the original design. The largest of the restaurant's four dining rooms is usually devoted to the care and feeding of bus tours, so you might find a bit more intimacy in one of the three smaller dining areas.

Bracamonte 6. www.hospederiadebracamonte.com. ✆ **92-025-12-80.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 8€–22€. MC, V. Wed–Mon 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

Las Cancelas ★ 🏷 CASTILIAN When the tourists mob nearby restaurants, Las Cancelas is where you'll find the locals. You get good food, regional specialties, a time-mellowed Castilian ambience, and affordable prices—a rather unbeatable combination. You can begin at the restaurant's tapas bar, where tasty tapas, good wine, and conversation flow. Later you can head back to the dining room, on a stone-columned patio where paper covers the old wooden tables. A carafe of regional wine arrives at your table as you tear off hunks of freshly baked bread and wait for seasonal dishes to emerge from the kitchen. Meats are roasted in a wood-fired oven and are the house specialties. The *chuletón de Ávila,* a mammoth T-bone veal steak, is the chef's specialty. Other options include platters of roast chicken and baked lamb.

This Castilian inn is also one of the bargain places to stay in Ávila, offering 14 small but modernized and comfortable **guest rooms,** each with private bathroom with shower, costing only 78€ for a double. Each unit has a TV, phone, and (in some cases) air-conditioning.

Cruz Viejo 6. www.lascancelas.com. ☎ **92-021-22-49.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm.

Mesón del Rastro CASTILIAN If fresh preparations and pristine ingredients matter more to you than fancy presentations, plan on dining at this old inn built into the 11th-century town walls. The typically Castilian menu includes at least four different preparations of roast baby lamb (Ávila is in sheep country) and tender white veal. Dessert recipes have been passed down from Ávila's nuns. Try the candied egg yolks, known as *yemas de Santa Teresa.* They are something of an acquired taste, but Ávila residents profess a love for them. The owners also maintain **El Rastro,** a small hotel with 19 comfortable rooms (see below).

Plaza del Rastro 1. www.elrastroavila.com. ☎ **92-021-12-18.** Reservations required Fri–Sat only. Main courses 8€–23€; fixed-price menu 24€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9–11pm.

Where to Stay

Ávila attracts many religious pilgrims, but the hotels are few. Book ahead, especially for July and August, when religious Spaniards make their pilgrimages and the searing heat means you will certainly want air-conditioning.

EXPENSIVE

Parador Raimundo de Borgona ★ Two blocks northwest of Plaza de la Victoria, this *parador* stands on a ridge overlooking the banks of the Adaja River. In the 16th century it was known as the Palace of Benavides; its facade forms part of the square. Most of its public lounges open onto a central courtyard with an inner gallery of columns. The refurbished guest rooms contain tasteful furnishings: stone fireplaces, polished tile floors, old chests, leather armchairs, paintings, and sculptures. The guest rooms, generally midsize, come with modern comforts, including good mattresses and tiled bathrooms, but many retain their granite floors.

Marqués de Camales de Chozas 2, 05001 Ávila. www.parador.es. ☎ **92-021-13-40.** Fax 92-022-61-66. 61 units. 133€–252€ double; 300€–324€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Garage 15€; free outside parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Hotel Palacio de Los Velada ★★ Four centuries ago, this palace played host to the likes of Carlos V and Felipe II, and it's still the best choice for a royal stay in this city otherwise haunted by religious fervor. The rooms are arrayed around a central courtyard. The noble style of the public areas and the plush comforts of the guest rooms live up the hotel's perfect location near the cathedral. All the modern conveniences, including wide, comfortable beds, have been installed, along with state-of-the-art plumbing. Some rooms even have deep soaking tubs.

Plaza de la Catedral 10, 05001 Ávila. www.veladahoteles.com. ☎ **92-025-51-00.** Fax 92-025-49-00. 145 units. 80€–140€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Reina Isabel ★ Cited for its elegant decoration, this 1997 hotel is about a 6-minute walk outside the walls of the Old City. Although the facade is rather severe, the tone warms considerably once you're inside. The interior is classically designed, with separate areas depicting various epochs in Spanish history, complete with furnishings and objets d'art from the 14th to the 18th centuries, including a magnificent altarpiece from the 15th century. The spacious guest rooms are similarly decorated and furnished with classical motifs; they have marble floors and comfortable beds.

Paseo de la Estación 17, 05001 Ávila. www.reinaisabel.com. ✆ **92-025-10-22.** Fax 92-025-11-73. 60 units. 62€–125€ double; 165€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

El Rastro 🏷 Situated near the junction of calles Caballeros and Cepadas, this restored inn is a good bargain choice. Few visitors know that you can spend the night at this old inn built into the city walls. The small guest rooms, basic and well maintained, include immaculate bathrooms.

Plaza del Rastro 1, 05001 Ávila. www.elrastroavila.com. ✆ **92-021-12-18.** Fax 92-025-16-26. 19 units. 47€–65€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, no phone.

Gran Hostal San Segundo This small hotel and restaurant is just outside the historic walls of Ávila. The elegant 19th-century building itself has been renovated to maintain its historical charm and incorporate modern comfort. The soft salmon-hued reception rooms have high ceilings, and the midsize guest rooms are spotlessly clean, simple, and unpretentious.

San Segundo 30, 05001 Ávila. www.hsansegundo.com. ✆ **92-025-25-90.** Fax 92-025-27-90. 14 units. 40€–70€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free street parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hospedería de Bracamonte ★★ 🎁 The most tranquil spot in town is this little gem decorated in classic Castilian style. It lies 1 block north of Plaza de Victoria, the main square within the city walls. A restful and quiet oasis, it has a number of charming features, including a lovely patio and a dark-wood Castilian motif throughout. Converted to a small inn in 1989, the *hostería* retains some of its aristocratic origins as the town house of Gov. Don Juan Teherán y Monjaraz. Guest rooms are spacious and have whitewashed walls; some have fireplaces and four-poster beds.

Bracamonte 6, 05001 Ávila. www.hospederiadebracamonte.com. ✆ **92-025-12-80.** Fax 92-025-38-38. 23 units. 50€–75€ double. MC, V. Free street parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV, minibar.

CUENCA ★★

161km (100 miles) E of Madrid, 325km (202 miles) SW of Zaragoza

Cuenca is a must-see for every traveler who has dreamed of flying. This city sits atop a high limestone spur with sheer walls dropping down to two river gorges. It was built in 714 as a Moorish outpost on the supposition that the aerie could command every strategic pass between the mountains and the flatlands. That presumption held for 4 centuries, until Alfonso VIII came marching up the hill with his swordsmen in 1177. Only a crumbling wall and the Arco de Bezudo remain from the Muslim fortress, but the Christian conquerors shoe-horned wonderful Gothic and Renaissance palaces into the medieval street plan. Known for its *casas colgadas* (hanging houses) that are cantilevered over the gorges, Cuenca still engages the imagination, particularly of visual artists. The city has more art museums per capita than any other place in central Spain. It is also a favorite weekend getaway for middle-class Madrileños, all the more so since high-speed rail service became available.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Four **conventional trains** leave Madrid's Atocha railway station daily and arrive about 3 hours later in Cuenca's New Town at Paseo del Ferrocarril (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). A one-way ticket from Madrid costs 12€. An additional 10 high-speed trains (AVE and ALVIA) depart from Atocha and arrive about 50 minutes later at Estación AVE Francisco Zóbel in the New Town at Cerro de La Estrella. A one-way ticket from Madrid costs 19€-20€.

There are also about eight **buses** from Madrid every day. Buses arrive at Calle Fermín Caballero 20 (www.avanzabus.com for information and schedules; ✆ **96-922-70-87** or 96-922-11-84). A one-way fare costs 13€ to 21€.

Cuenca is the junction for several highways and about a dozen lesser roads that connect it to towns within its region. From Madrid, take the N-III to Tarancón, and then take the N-400, which leads directly into Cuenca.

VISITOR INFORMATION The city **tourist information office,** Calle Alfonso VIII no. 2 (http://turismo.cuenca.es; ✆ **96-924-10-51**), is open daily 9am to 8pm.

Cuenca's *casas colgadas*, or hanging houses.

Exploring Cuenca

Plan to spend your entire stay in Cuenca walking around the Old Town. It is a vertical fantasy where medieval foundations have accreted Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance upper stories. The sharp angles and exposure to the high-altitude sun give the physical city the look of a cubist puzzle. The streets (often cobbled, and always lined with grooves for the rainfall runoff) are narrow and steep, and even athletic visitors may find themselves flagging as they hike around.

Plaza Mayor ★ is the social center of the Old City. It is flanked by the Ayuntamiento (City Hall) on one side and the cathedral on the other. Only local traffic is permitted in the plaza during most of the day, making it safer for walking around. Cafes spill out into the plaza at mealtimes. **Calle Alfonso VIII** heads downhill from the plaza. Painters and photographers love the faded pastel colors of the houses, many of which have medieval crests above their ancient doors.

Be sure to walk (or take the bus) to the top of the hill by the **Arco de Bezudo** for almost unbelievably long vistas. Different but just as dramatic views can be found at the **Mirador de San Miguel,** northwest of Plaza Mayor. It overlooks the Júcar gorge and its green hillsides. Deep gorges give Cuenca an unreal quality, and eight old bridges span two rivers at the bottom to connect the medieval city with the booming new town. Assuming that you're not prone to vertigo, take a walk on the **Puente de San Pablo ★**, a footbridge between the Old City and the *parador* that crosses a 60m (197-ft.) drop. It gives a great perspective on the ***casas colgadas* ★**, which are illuminated at night. In the summer, the intense heat of the day suddenly dissipates at night and the streets of Cuenca become so cool that you may want a jacket or sweater.

Catedral de Cuenca ★ CATHEDRAL Begun in the 12th century, this Gothic cathedral was built by Anglo-Norman masons to please the homesick queen Eleanora Plantagenet, the Norman wife of Alfonso VIII. It is contemporary with—and in the same style—as Chartres. Part of the structure collapsed in the 20th century but has been restored. A national monument filled with religious art treasures, the cathedral dominates Plaza Mayor in the center of town. The audio guide to the church supplies in-depth art history on the sculptures and paintings still in place. The cathedral's *museo diocesano* exhibits two canvases by El Greco, a collection of Flemish tapestries (some beautifully designed), and a statue of the Virgen del Sagrario from the 1100s.

Plaza Mayor de Pío XII. ✆ **96-922-46-26.** Free admission to cathedral during Mass; other times 2.80€ adults, 2€ students and seniors. Paid admission includes audio guide and admission to museum. July–Sept Mon–Fri 10am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–6:30pm; Oct–Apr daily 10:30am–2pm and 4–7pm; May–June Mon–Fri 10:30am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sat 10:30am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sun 10:30am–2pm and 5–6:30pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

The Hanging Houses of Cuenca

You can view one of Cuenca's most thrilling sights by walking the streets at night to admire the illuminated ***casas colgadas* (hanging houses)** of the town. Dating from the 14th century, these famous houses seem to hang over the deep Huécar ravine. Some are built so close to the edge that you feel they are about to plunge over it.

Rock Art

If you have the time, you can make a side trip to the interesting but not exactly enchanting **Ciudad Encantada (Enchanted City),** Carretera de la Sierra, about 40km (25 miles) to the northeast of Cuenca. Storms and underground waters have created a city here out of large rocks and boulders, shaping them into bizarre designs: a seal, an elephant, a Roman bridge. Take CU-912, turning northeast onto CU-913. Ciudad Encantada is signposted.

Fundación Antonio Pérez ★ 🎁 ART MUSEUM Antonio Pérez was a 20th-century artist with a wicked sense of humor, but he was a collector first. He bequeathed this witty collection that makes a perfect complement to the Saura foundation and the abstract art museum (see both below). Pérez exuberantly embraced pop art and his own artistic niche, "Found Art." His Castrati is a group of three bells minus their clappers. Pérez found a lot, and therefore left a lot.

Ronda de Julian Romero, 20. www.fundacionantonioperez.es. ☎ **96-923-06-19.** Free admission. Wed–Mon 11am–2pm and 5–9pm (winter closes 8pm). Bus: 1 or 2.

Fundación Antonio Saura ★ ART MUSEUM A great abstract modernist and one of the founders of the Grupo El Paso (Spain's iconoclastic mid-20th-century abstract art movement), Antonio Saura (1930–98) worked largely with a monochromatic palette. He developed a highly individual gestural vocabulary of forms to represent male and female bodies, crucifixes, and such Spanish mythic figures as Don Quixote and Goya's *Yellow Dog*. This museum displays both Saura's own work and his private collection of fellow artists.

Plaza de San Nicolas, 4. www.fundacionantoniosaura.es. ☎ **96-923-60-54.** Free admission. Summer Mon and Wed–Sat 11am–2pm and 4–8pm, Sun 11am–2pm; winter daily 11am–2pm and 4–7pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

Museo de Arte Abstracto Español ★★ ART MUSEUM Think of this museum as a two-fer: Not only do you get to see an outstanding collection of 20th-century Spanish art, you get to see it inside one of the *casas colgadas*. The museum was conceived by painter Fernando Zóbel, who donated it in 1980 to the Fundación Juan March. It was the first of Cuenca's contemporary art spaces. Several of the most outstanding abstract Spanish painters are represented, including Rafael Canogar (especially his *Toledo*), Luis Feito, Zóbel himself, Tàpies, Eduardo Chillida, Gustavo Torner, Gerardo Rueda, Sempere, Cuixart, and Antonio Saura. (See Saura's grotesque Geraldine Chaplin and also his study of Brigitte Bardot, a vision of horror, making the French actress look like an escapee from Picasso's *Guernica*.)

Calle los Canónigos s/n. www.march.es. ☎ **96-921-29-83.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students and seniors. Tues–Fri 11am–2pm and 4–6pm; Sat 11am–2pm and 4–8pm; Sun 11am–2:30pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

Where to Eat

Figón del Huécar ★ CASTILIAN This antique home, which once belonged to the modern singer José Luis Perales, makes one of the most idyllic and romantic dining spots in Cuenca. It is only 2 blocks from the cathedral and features a spotlit terrace for romantic summer dining. Start with ajoarriero (a traditional pâté of potato, salt cod, and garlic) before moving on to such contemporary fare as cannelloni filled with oxtail and braised apple. One typical dish is called morteruelo, a medley of partridge, rabbit, hare, pork liver, chicken, and ham. Osso buco, with a reduction of La Mancha wine, is a vibrantly seasoned choice. The restaurant has an adjoining addition that functions as a wine bar and tasting room. This is the place to sample some of the outstanding reds of Cuenca, an increasingly important wine-producing region.

Julián Romero 6. www.figondelhuecar.com. ✆ **96-920-00-62.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 19€–25€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 12:30–4pm and 7–11pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

Mesón Casas Colgadas ★★ CASTILIAN/INTERNATIONAL One of the most spectacular dining rooms in Spain stands on one of the most precarious precipices in Cuenca. Established in the 1960s, it occupies a five-story 19th-century house with sturdy supporting walls and beams. Pine balconies and windows overlook the ravine below and the hills beyond. In fact, it's the most photographed "suspended house" in town, and dinner here is worth every euro. The menu includes regional dishes and a variety of well-prepared international favorites. Drinks are served in the tavern room on street level, so even if you're not dining here, you may want to drop in for a drink and the view. You'll find the Mesón Casas Colgadas just south of the cathedral and near the Museo de Arte Abstracto Español (see above).

Canónigos s/n. www.mesoncasascolgadas.com. ✆ **96-922-35-09.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–25€; fixed-price menus 27€–38€; tasting menu 40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 1–4pm; Wed–Sun 9–11pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

Where to Stay

Leonor de Aquitania Perched high on the hillside above an almost sheer drop, the hotel enjoys spectacular views of both the Old Town of Cuenca from one angle and the narrow valley rising from the harsh though beautiful precipice opposite. The reception rooms have been maintained in extremely good taste, and the hotel evokes an elegantly restrained and comfortable charm. The midsize rooms feature a relaxed traditional style of pale walls, tile floors, and colorful floral fabrics. The Hebrea Hermosa (Beautiful Jewish Maiden) suite is one of the most charming in this quiet medieval city.

Calle San Pedro 60, 16001 Cuenca. www.hotelleonordeaquitania.com. ✆ **96-923-10-00.** Fax 96-923-10-04. 49 units. 103€–120€ double; 178€–199€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free in lobby). *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Parador de Cuenca ★★ This government-sponsored hotel, which opened for business in 1992, occupies the dignified premises of what was originally built in 1523 as a Dominican monastery. A noteworthy example of late Gothic architecture, it stands on a hillside opposite Cuenca's Old City and connected by a pedestrian bridge. It is clearly the town's most prestigious address—assuming you want to look at Cuenca's improbable Old City rather than stay there. Its timeless three stories are decorated with masses of intricately chiseled 16th-century stonework (some enhanced with glass panels overlooking the river). The complex contains a church, and a beautiful if austere cloister. The two floors of midsize guest rooms are comfortably traditional.

Subida a San Pablo s/n, 16001 Cuenca. www.parador.es. ✆ **96-923-23-20.** Fax 96-923-25-34. 63 units. 155€–194€ double; 310€–336€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Posada de San José ★★ 🏷 In its understated and unpretentious way, this is the most appealing lodging in Cuenca, perched as it is high above the gorge of the River Huécar, in Cuenca's historic core. A short walk from the cathedral, it was originally built in the 1700s by the local church as the headquarters for its choir. In 1983, the then-decrepit building was bought by Antonio and Canada-born Jennifer Cortinas, and reopened as an inn. They invested time and money on its restoration. Guest rooms are comfortable and dignified, yet retain an almost monastic simplicity, with white walls, beamed ceilings, and the kind of dark, handcrafted Iberian furniture you usually associate with a monastery.

Calle Julián Romero 4, 16001 Cuenca. www.posadasanjose.com. ✆ **96-921-13-00.** Fax 96-923-03-65. 22 units, 18 with bathroom. 40€–50€ double without bathroom; 78€–157€ double with bathroom. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 1 or 2. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* No phone.

SORIA ★

225km (140 miles) NE of Madrid; 76km (47 miles) N of Medinaceli

This small, vibrant city on the La Manchan plain is the most neglected of all the "art cities" that envelop the periphery of Madrid. Its praises were first sung by Antonio Machado (1875–1939), the famous Generation of '98 poet who wrote *Campos de Castilla* (1912). When he came to live in Soria, he wrote of "*Soria fría, Soria pura*" (cold Soria, pure Soria). After the death of his 19-year-old wife, Leonor, Machado departed in 1912.

Soria is not only the name of the city but the name of the province over which it presides. Today the town of 40,000 is visited for its Romanesque churches, for its raucous Fiesta de San Juan in late June, and for its summer concerts and street theater. Lying on the banks of the River Duero, the town has many historic squares filled with bars offering outdoor seating. ***Tip:*** Ignore the tacky modern suburbs that surround Soria, and head instead for the historic core where the action is.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Trains** leave Monday to Friday from Madrid to Soria (trip time: 3 hr.). A one-way fare costs 18€. In addition, daily **ALSA** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**) **buses** connect Madrid and Soria; the trip takes only 2½ hours, with a one-way fare costing 14€. Motorists leave Madrid heading east on the A2 to Medinaceli, at which point they cut north along N-III into Soria.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Soria Tourist Office,** at Calle Medinaceli 2 (www.sorianitelaimaginas.com; ✆ **97-521-20-52**), is open July to September 15 daily 9am to 8pm. Off-season hours are Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 5pm.

Exploring Soria

Allow about 2 hours (more if you plan to stop inside some churches) to explore the **Casco Viejo ★★**, the center of town. Head first for the Plaza Mayor, the

The precarious Ermita de San Saturio above the banks of the Duero River.

main square in the heart of Old Town, and wander at your leisure through the narrow, character-filled streets branching off from here.

Ermita de San Saturio CHURCH Getting to this 18th-century chapel constructed on a steep rocky hillside is part of the fun. You **stroll ★★** along the banks of the Duero River, traveling a pathway lined with poplars and following the footsteps of the poet Machado. He traversed the 1.5km (1 mile) to the little chapel at least once or twice a week during his stay in Soria. This is one of the most colorful and romantic walks in the province.

You begin at the Monastery of San Palo, and the footpath is marked. The shaded path leads to the cave where the holy man San Saturio (493–568) sat in meditation most of his life. Today he is the patron saint of Soria. An octagonal chapel is built into the rock near where he lived, and it's covered in its interior with frescoes from the 18th century.

The view from the countryside here is panoramic. The present temple itself is baroque in style, decorated with numerous works of art, including paintings, murals, and Gothic statues of the crucified Christ as well as the Virgin with the baby Jesus.

Paseo San Saturio. ☎ **97-518-07-03.** Free admission. July–Aug Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4:30–8:30pm; Apr–June and Sept–Oct Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4:30–7:30pm; Nov–Mar Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4:30–6:30pm.

Museo Numantino ★ MUSEUM Founded in 1919, this museum is filled with archaeological artifacts, many of which date from prehistoric times. Representing everything from the Paleolithic age to today, the exhibits are wide ranging, with some of the most noteworthy pieces being Roman artifacts. One section on the top floor is filled with painted ceramics from the ruins of the Old City of Numancia. The ruins lie 7km (4⅓ miles) northeast of Soria. The city of Numancia lives today in legend because its citizens heroically resisted invaders from Carthage for 8 months, killing themselves and burning their city when the battle turned against them.

Paseo del Espolón. ✆ **97-522-13-97.** Admission 1.20€ adults, free for children 17 and under. July–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 5–8pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–June Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sun 10am–2pm.

San Juan de Duero CHURCH On the far bank of the Duero, this church and cloister were founded by the Hospitallers of San Juan of Jerusalem (known today as the Knights of Malta) in the 12th century. It flourished until the 18th century. Today it is visited for its art and architecture, especially the ruins of the graceful **cloister ★**, which dates from the 12th and 13th centuries. It shows an obvious Moorish influence. Inside the church is a small museum filled with Romanesque artifacts.

Piso de las Ánimas. ✆ **97-523-02-18.** Admission 1€. July–Sept Tues–Sun 10am–2pm, Tues–Sat 5–8pm; Oct–June Tues–Sun 10am–2pm, Tues–Sat 4–7pm.

San Juan de Rabanera CHURCH One of the town's Romanesque churches, this is the most harmonious in its lines. Constructed in the 12th century, it was restored in the early 20th century. The portal depicts the major events in the life of St. John. Inside, there are Gothic, even Byzantine, architectural decorations, along with Byzantine-style vaulting. Look for two intriguing crucifixes—one a Romanesque creation over the altar, the other, in the more Flamboyant baroque style, in the north transept.

Plaza de San Esteban. No phone. Free admission. Irregular hours.

Santo Domingo ★ CHURCH This church has one of the finest Romanesque facades in Spain, and it's well worth a long look. The west front contains two tiers of "blind" arcades and a single, beautifully carved and **central portal ★★**, the most elegant in the entire province. The founders of this church were Alfonso VIII and his wife, Eleanor of England, and also the Duchess of Gascony. Carved scenes illustrate early chapters of Genesis. The most gruesome depiction is the *Massacre of the Innocents*. The interior of the church was redone in the 16th century.

Clemente Sae'z. No phone. Free admission. Sun–Mon 6:30am–9pm; Sat 6:30–11am and 1–9pm.

Where to Eat

Fogón del Salvador ★ CASTILIAN In the exact center of the Old Town, this restaurant serves first-rate regional food and has its own kind of old-fashioned charm. It prepares an ambitious menu, including a full array of succulent grilled beefsteaks from steers, not retired milk cows as is so often the case in Spain. Steaks are priced by the gram. The restaurant also serves superb chops, or *chuletóns*. Begin perhaps with seasonal mushrooms or a terrine of duck liver with pistachios drizzled with olive oil. Another delectable main dish is thin-sliced carpaccio of beef with caramelized onions. The food is excellent, but the distracted waitstaff can barely keep up with the speed and efficiency of the kitchen.

Plaza del Salvador. www.fogonsalvador.com. ✆ **97-523-01-94.** Reservations required. Main courses 24€–36€. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed Tues Oct 16–May 14.

Mesón Castellano ★ CASTILIAN Across from the Ayuntamiento (Town Hall), this is the most regional restaurant in the Old Town. It's cozy and inviting, with specialties such as veal chops (*chuletón de ternera*) cooked succulently over an open fire. Try such rural dishes as cured pork sausage eaten *con la mano* (by hand), or soaked bread crumbs fried with pepers and bacon (*migas pastorales*).

Fish is shipped in, including hake, which can be broiled or grilled to your specifications. A good dessert is the pears poached in a red-wine sauce.

Plaza Mayor 2. www.mesoncastellanosoria.com. ✆ **97-521-30-45.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9pm–1am.

Where to Stay

Hostería Solar de Tejada ★ 🎁 This is the most tranquil place to stay in town, and also the most traditional and characteristic of the region. All that, plus it's the best value. Bedrooms are furnished with a certain charm, often with wood furniture. This old house has been brought up-to-date, although the original bathrooms remain, but the plumbing has been modernized. We find the staff the most hospitable in town. Even though there's no restaurant on-site, there are many dining places and cafeterias within an easy walk from the doorstep.

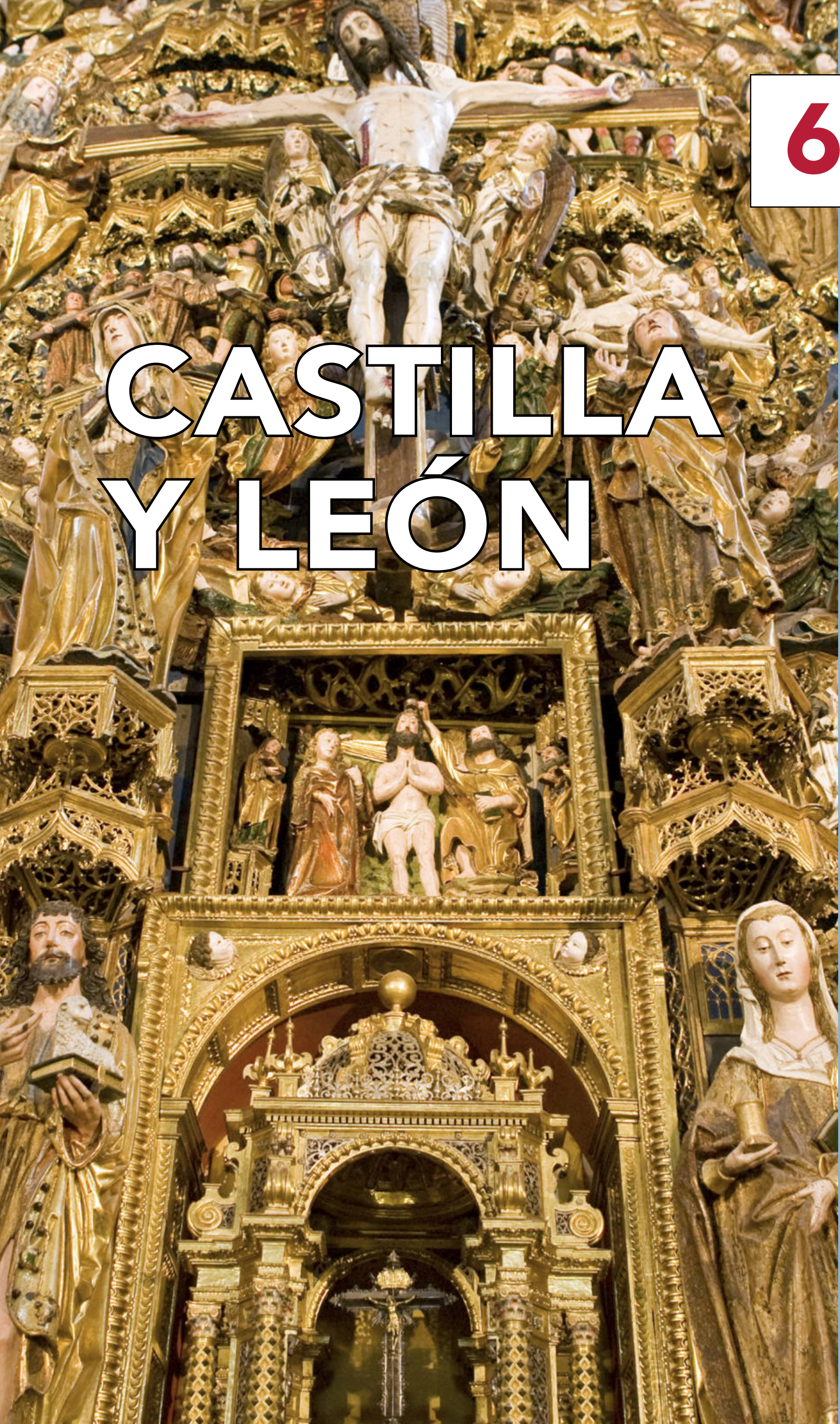
Claustrilla 1, 42002 Soria. www.hosteriasolardetejada.es. ✆ **97-523-00-54.** Fax 97-523-00-54. 18 units. 56€ double. MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel Alfonso VIII ★ Despite its plain, modern, and unadorned facade, this offers the best guest rooms right in town, though it doesn't have the charm of the more traditional Hostería Solar de Tejada (see above). The midsize bedrooms are done in a simple but tasteful style and have exceptionally comfortable beds. The breakfast buffet is the best in town, and the on-site restaurant, though nothing special, serves competent Castilian cuisine, mainly to hotel guests.

Calle de Alfonso VIII, no. 10, 42003 Soria. www.hotelalfonsoviiisoria.com/index.php. ✆ **97-522-62-11.** Fax 97-521-36-65. 81 units. 95€–135€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Parador de Soria—Hotel Antonio Machado ★★★ We'd stay here just for the views of old Soria and the Duero River as well as of the ruins of an ancient castle. The *parador* is named after the Sevillano writer Antonio Machado. Pictures of the poet and excerpts from his works are found in many of the public rooms. Rising on a hilltop, enveloped by parklike grounds, this modern *parador* evokes a mountain ski lodge. Wood floors and contemporary wood furniture give a fresh aura to the place. The sleek and modern bedrooms are midsize, and many open onto views; bathrooms are state of the art. The on-site restaurant is a bit expensive but features such luxury dishes as pheasant pâté or roast suckling pig. Take Calle de Santiago to the *parador,* going by the church and burial grounds of El Espino, where Machado's teenage wife, Leonor, is buried.

Parque de Castillo, 42005 Soria. www.parador.es. ✆ **97-524-08-00.** Fax 97-524-08-03. 67 units. 90€–173€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).



6

CASTILLA Y LEÓN

Spain emerged from the medieval kingdoms of Castilla, León, and Aragón. Their monarchs unified the north and led the charge for Reconquest of Spain from its Muslim rulers. When Isabel of Castilla wed Fernando of Aragón in 1469, the seeds of modern Spain were sown. Five years later she became queen of Castilla y León, ruling most of the country in tandem with her husband. When the "Catholic Monarchs" (as the pope dubbed them) drove the Moors from Granada in 1492, the Reconquest was complete. That same year Columbus claimed the Americas for the crown, and a unified and wealthy Spain was on the ascendancy.

This fiercely religious queen and her politically adept husband fashioned an empire whose influence extended throughout Spain, Europe, and the New World. Castilla's historic power was transferred to Madrid long ago, but many reminders of its storied past remain. In the castle-riddled ancient kingdom of León, annexed to Castilla since 1301, you'll find Salamanca, Zamora, and the provincial capital of León.

In Castilla, we cover the inland provincial capital of Valladolid, where Isabel married Fernando and where a brokenhearted Christopher Columbus died on May 19, 1506. From here we move on to Burgos, once the capital of Castilla. Vivar, a small town nearby, produced Spain's greatest national hero, El Cid, who conquered the Moorish kingdom of Valencia.

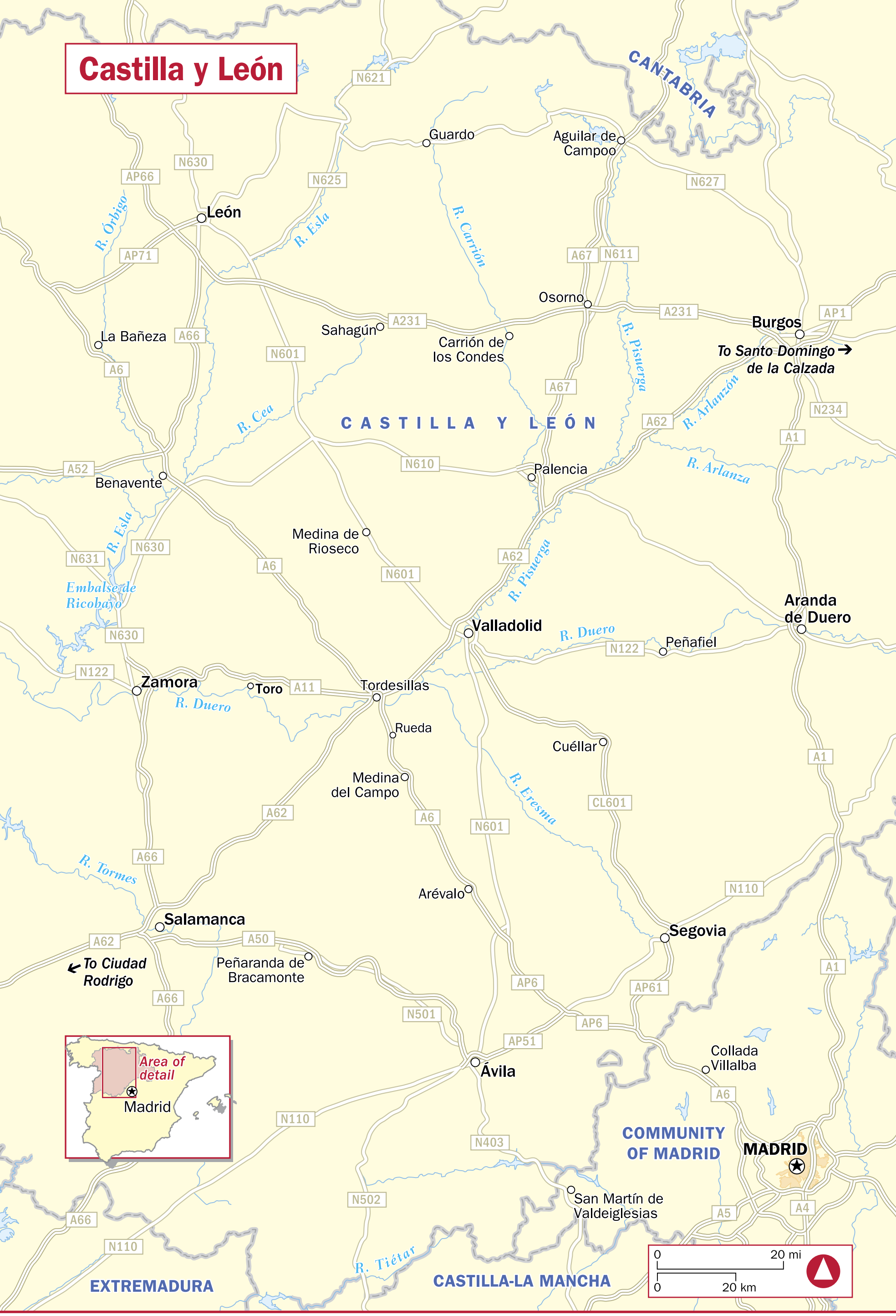
For Castilla y León destinations of Segovia and Ávila, see chapter 5, p. 148.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN

- **Letting the sun shine in through León's stained glass:** The glass walls of León's cathedral have no equal elsewhere in Spain. Each window tells a story, literally or symbolically. When the sun shines through, it is like being inside a kaleidoscope.
- **Sipping tinto de Toro on the town's Plaza Mayor:** Farmers have grown wine grapes in Toro for at least 1,000 years, but only in recent decades has the local strain of Tempranillo won worldwide plaudits. Where better to taste what all the fuss is about than in the grape's hometown?
- **Seeing the tomb of El Cid:** The shaft of light from the oculus in the roof of Burgos cathedral shines down on the modest tombs of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar and his wife, Doña Jimena, lying on a slab at the center of the church's Latin cross.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The sculpted altar of Cartuja de Miraflores.**

Castilla y León


CANTABRIA
N621
Guardo
Aguilar de Campoo
N630
AP66
N625
N627
León
R. Órbigo
R. Esla
R. Carrión
AP71
A67
N611
Osorno
A231
Burgos
AP1
To Santo Domingo de la Calzada
La Bañeza
A66
Sahagún
Carrión de los Condes
R. Pisuerga
A6
N601
A67
N234
R. Cea
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
A62
R. Arlanzón
A1
A52
N610
Palencia
R. Arlanza
Benavente
R. Esla
N630
N631
Medina de Rioseco
A6
N601
A62
R. Pisuerga
Embalse de Ricobayo
Aranda de Duero
N630
Valladolid
R. Duero
N122
Peñafiel
N122
Zamora
Toro
A11
Tordesillas
R. Duero
Rueda
Cuéllar
Medina del Campo
R. Eresma
CL601
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R. Tormes
Arévalo
N110
Salamanca
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Collada Villalba
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- **Finding the frog in Salamanca:** Salamanca's Renaissance stone carvers not only had imagination—they had a sense of humor. The university portal is a tour de force of relief sculpture, right down to the tiny frog perched atop a skull that students desperately seek to win a good grade.
- **Mingling with pilgrims in Santo Domingo de la Calzada:** Not everyone has the faith, tenacity, or time to make the walking pilgrimage across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela, but any traveler can mingle with the pilgrims in their ancient way station of Santo Domingo.

VALLADOLID ★

201km (125 miles) NW of Madrid, 134km (83 miles) SE of León

From the 13th century until its eventual decay in the early 17th century, Valladolid was a royal city and an intellectual center attracting saints and philosophers. Isabel and Fernando married here, Felipe II was born here, and Columbus died here, on May 19, 1506, broken in spirit and body after Isabel had died and Fernando refused to reinstate him as a governor of the Indies.

Brutally cold in winter and sweltering in summer, Valladolid flourishes by virtue of location. Coming from Madrid, it is the gateway to northern Spain and the principal railhead for the important Ribera del Duero wine district.

From the tourist office (see below), you can pick up a map that marks all the major monuments. These attractions can be covered on foot, although you may want to take a taxi to the two most distant points recommended: the Museo Nacional de Escultura and the Museo Oriental.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Flights** to Valladolid land at **Villanubla Airport,** Highway N-601 (www.aena.es; ✆ **98-341-55-00**), a 15-minute taxi ride from the center of town. **Air Nostrum** (www.airnostrum.es; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) has daily flights to and from Barcelona.

Valladolid is well serviced by 21 daily **trains** to and from Madrid (trip time: 50 min.–2½ hr.). The one-way fare is 19€ to 36€. Another city with train links to Valladolid is Burgos (16 trains per day). The train station (Estación del Norte), Calle Recondo s/n, by Plaza Colón (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), is 1.6km (1 mile) south of the town's historic center, and 1 block southwest of the Campo Grande park.

The **bus** station is an 8-minute walk from the railway station, at Puente Colgante (✆ **98-323-63-08**) on the southern edge of town. There are more than a dozen buses every day to and from Madrid (trip time: 2¼ hr.). Eight buses per day arrive from Zamora (trip time: 1¼ hr.), three buses per day from Burgos (trip time: 1½ hr.).

Valladolid lies at the center of the rectangle created by Burgos, León, Segovia, and Salamanca, and is connected to each by good highways. From Madrid, driving time is about 2¼ hours. Take superhighway A-6 northwest from Madrid, turning north on 403.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** inside Pabellón de Cristal, Calle Acera de Recoletos (www.turismocastillayleon.com; ✆ **98-321-93-10**), is open in winter Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 5pm; summer hours are daily 9am to 8pm.

Exploring Valladolid

Catedral ★ CATHEDRAL This grand house of worship embodies the battle in Spanish architecture between the schools of "less is more" and "more is more." In 1580, Felipe II commissioned Juan de Herrera, architect of El Escorial, to construct a Renaissance cathedral on the ruins of a 13th-century church. Work stopped when Felipe died, and the next architect, Alberto Churriguera, brought his family's signature baroque style to the exterior decoration. The sober classical interior conforms to Herrera's designs. A highlight is the 1551 altarpiece in the main apsidal chapel, the work of Juan de Juni. The polychrome wood statues of this church are some of the finest anywhere in Spain.

Plaza de Universidad 1. www.catedral-valladolid.com. ☎ **98-330-43-62.** Admission free to cathedral; museum 3.50€. Tues–Fri 10am–1:30pm and 4:30–7pm; Sat–Sun 10am–2pm.

Iglesia de San Pablo CHURCH Once a 17th-century Dominican monastery, San Pablo sports an impressive Isabelline-Gothic facade. Flanked by two towers, the main entrance supports levels of lacy stone sculpture. The church lies 6 blocks north of the cathedral and 1 block south of busy Avenida Santa Teresa. Mass is held daily, with eight Masses on Sunday.

Plaza San Pablo 4. ☎ **98-335-17-48.** Free admission. Daily 7:30am–1:30pm and 7–9:30pm.

Museo Casa de Cervantes ★ HISTORIC HOME Perhaps the best-documented domicile of Miguel de Cervantes, this house museum actually gives you a feel of how the author of *Don Quixote* lived and worked, especially in his final years. Behind its white walls, the house is simply furnished, as it was in the author's day. It's located half a block south of the cathedral and 2 blocks north of the city park, Campo Grande.

Calle del Rastro s/n. http://museocasacervantes.mcu.es. ☎ **98-330-88-10.** Admission 2.40€, 1.20€ students, free for all Sun. Tues–Sat 9:30am–3pm; Sun 10am–3pm.

The Catedral of Valladolid.

Museo Nacional de Escultura (National Museum of Sculpture) ★★ ART MUSEUM Located near Plaza de San Pablo, this museum displays a magnificent collection of gilded polychrome sculpture, an art form that reached its pinnacle in Valladolid. The figures were first carved from wood, and then painted with consummate skill and grace to assume lifelike dimensions. Take special note of the works by Alonso Berruguete (1480–1561), son of Pedro, one of Spain's great painters. From 1527 to 1532, the younger Berruguete labored over the altar of the Convent of San Benito—a masterpiece now housed here. In particular, see his *Crucifix with the Virgin and San Juan* in Room II, and his *San Sebastían and the Sacrifice of Isaac*, in Room III. Don't miss other masterpieces by Juan de Juni and Gregorio Fernández. The two-story cloisters are fascinating, with carved gargoyles and fleurs-de-lis encrusting the upper arcade. See the chapel where the confessor to Isabel I (Fray Alonso de Burgos) was buried—and be horrified by the gruesome sculpture *Death*.

Colegio de San Gregorio, Calle Cadenas de San Gregorio 1–3. http://museoescultura.mcu.es. ✆ **98-325-03-75.** Admission 3€, free for children 17 and under and adults 65 and over; free for all Sun. Sept 21–Mar 20 Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Mar 21–Sept 20 Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–9pm, Sun 10am–2pm.

Museo Oriental de Valladolid ART MUSEUM Located in the Royal College of the Augustinian Fathers, near Campo Grande park, the museum has 14 rooms: 10 Chinese and 4 Filipino. It has one of Spain's best collections of Asian art, with bronzes from the 7th century B.C. to the 18th century A.D.; 100 fine porcelain pieces; woodcarvings; paintings on paper and silk from the 12th century to the 19th; and ancient Chinese coins, furniture, jade, and ivory. In the Filipino section, ethnological and primitive art is represented by shields and arms. Eighteenth-century religious art can be admired in extraordinary ivories, embroideries, paintings, and silversmiths' work. Popular art of the 19th century includes bronzes, musical instruments, and statuary.

Paseo de Filipinos 7. www.museo-oriental.es. ✆ **98-330-68-00.** Admission 3€; free for children 9 and under. Mon–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–7pm; Sun and holidays 10am–2pm.

Where to Eat

El Mesón de Ángel Cuadrado ★ CASTILIAN The eponymous chef set up shop here in the late 1960s and has made a name for himself over the years by doing something truly novel in traditional Castilian cookery: He uses perfect, fresh ingredients and refuses to overcook them. He is locally known for the quality of his fish (shipped from Galicia and the Bay of Biscay), serving roasted hake *(merluza)* with crisp fresh asparagus or halibut brochettes with baby summer squash. Reserve ahead if you would like the classic roasted whole suckling pig or milk-fed lamb. On Mondays, Cuadrado offers the classical stew of mixed sausages, offal, and fatty cuts of meat, *cocido castellano*. The chef knew the wonders of Ribera del Duero wines well before they became famous, and offers a terrific choice of affordable bottles. The restaurant is near the Museo Casa de Cervantes (p. 197), a short walk from the tourist office.

Marina Escobar 1. www.mesonangelcuadrado.com. ✆ **98-330-16-73.** Reservations required. Main courses 23€–48€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sun 1:30–4pm. Closed Sun July–Aug.

La Parrilla de San Lorenzo ★ 🎁 CASTILIAN The word for grill in Spanish is *parrilla,* and, appropriately, this restaurant in the Hotel Convento serves terrific grilled fish and meats. The name is ironic, as it honors the martyr San Lorenzo, who was grilled to death. Dining here is an event, and you will pay accordingly. The *parrilla* began life as a 16th-century monastery, and you dine in an elegant setting of gilded mirrors, wrought iron, stained-glass windows, and stone arches. Consider starting with an *ensalada de rape* (monkfish salad) with little red pimientos. The chef does an excellent capon salad as well. The house specialty is milk-fed lamb slow-roasted in a wood-burning oven. Among the best fish offerings is the bonito from the Bay of Biscay lightly sautéed in olive oil.

Calle Pedro Niño 1. www.hotel-convento.com. ✆ **98-333-50-88.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–38€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight.

Mesón Cervantes ★★ SPANISH The atmosphere here is old-fashioned, but the cooking keeps up with the times. Cervantes has three great strengths: It has great connections with the Basque coast for its fish, it features a wood-burning oven for roasting meats, and it has its own bodega and vineyards in the Ribera del Duero. Start with lobster and rice medallions or red peppers stuffed with river crab, accompanied by a nice crisp Rueda wine. Then proceed to stewed capon in port-wine sauce with foie gras, or a wonderfully rich version of *rabo de toro* (braised oxtail). By all means get a pitcher of the excellent house red. The restaurant is beside the Museo Casa de Cervantes (p. 197), less than a kilometer (½ mile) south of the cathedral.

Calle del Rastro 6. ✆ **98-330-61-38.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug.

Entertainment & Nightlife

There are no great clubs to recommend in Valladolid, but that doesn't mean that the city isn't a lively, bustling place when darkness falls. It's a town of bars and pubs. **Calle del Paraíso** is in itself a virtual street of bars, with action overflowing later onto the pubby **Plaza del San Miguel.** Enter the pub or bar that looks the most amusing and has the most convivial crowd, and chances are you won't go wrong. Most of these pubs and bars cater to a younger crowd, often from the university. If you're 30 or older, you might want to patronize one of the cafes along **Calle de Vincente Meliner,** especially those near Plaza Dorado.

Just off Plaza Mayor is the liveliest bar in town, **El Corcho,** Calle Correo 2 (✆ **98-333-08-61**), which also serves good tapas. It offers a very rustic atmosphere, with 300-year-old brick walls and sawdust sprinkled over the much-used floor. Copper pots and air-dried hams hang above the marble-topped bar. The cook rightly boasts of his *tostada de gambas* (shrimp drizzled with virgin olive oil and sprinkled over toasted bread). Other specialties include fish croquettes and Iberian ham and codfish. Tapas range in price from 2€ to 8€. Hours are daily 1 to 4pm and 8pm to midnight.

Where to Stay

Felipe IV Conveniently located near the east end of the main city park, Campo Grande, the Felipe IV is a pleasant and modern business hotel with just enough extra decoration (gaudy chandeliers in the public areas, for example) to do double duty for weddings and other events. When no business meetings are in town, however, the clean and simple rooms are a steal. Most units are equipped with two twin beds, so ask if you really want a *cama matrimonial*. A garage provides parking, and you can walk all over town from here.

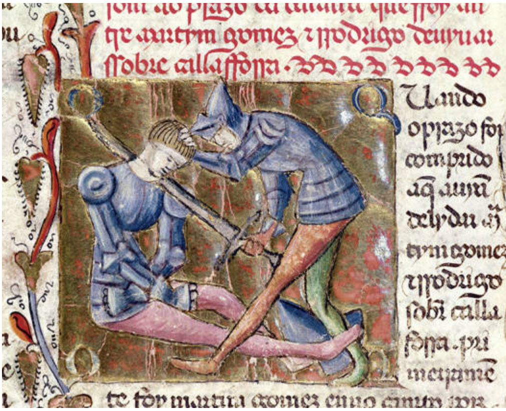
Calle de Gamazo 16, 47004 Valladolid. www.hfelipeIV.com. ☎ **98-330-70-00.** Fax 98-330-86-87. 127 units. 60€–135€ double; 204€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; exercise room; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Meliá Olid ★ Set in the heart of the historic zone about 5 blocks northwest of the cathedral, this modern hotel relies heavily on travertine and marble tiled walls for its sense of importance. Like the Felipe IV, it is chiefly a business hotel these days, and the generously proportioned rooms are comfortable and functional. And like the Felipe IV, they are a bargain unless a conference is in town.

Plaza San Miguel 10, 47003 Valladolid. www.solmelia.com. ☎ **800/336-3542** in the U.S., or 98-335-72-00. Fax 98-333-68-28. 210 units. 66€–151€ double; 297€–356€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (50€); babysitting; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

BURGOS ★★

242km (150 miles) N of Madrid, 121km (75 miles) NE of Valladolid



A 1344 depiction of El Cid.

Burgos has a way of breeding conquerors. El Cid Campeador, the Spanish hero immortalized in the epic *El Cantar de Mío Cid,* was born near here and his remains have a kinglike prominence in the grand cathedral. Franco made the right-wing city his Nationalist army headquarters in the Spanish Civil War. As a result, Burgos remains more intact than most medieval Spanish cities, and it lives up to its roots as the "cradle of Castilla." Employing a distinctive lisp (their hero is "El Theed"), Burgos residents speak textbook Castellano. Of course, they wrote the textbooks. Burgos is a provincial capital on the desert *meseta* (plateau). Ferociously hot in summer, it comes alive at night as students flock to the cafes and dance clubs.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Burgos is well connected by **train** from Madrid (trip time: 2–3½ hr.), Barcelona (trip time: 8–9 hr.), the French border, Valladolid, and Bilbao (trip time: 2½–3½ hr.). Fares from Madrid range from 30€ to 41€; from Barcelona, 64€ to 78€; from Valladolid, 9€ to 18€; and from Bilbao, 19€ to 23€. The Burgos railway station is at the terminus of Avenida de Conde Guadalhorce, .8km (½ mile) southwest of the center, Plaza de la Estación. To get here, head for the major traffic hub in Plaza Castilla, and then walk due south across the Arlanzón River. For train information or tickets, visit www.renfe.es or call ☎ **90-232-03-20.**

Some 18 **buses** a day make the 2¾-hour trip from Madrid. A one-way fare costs 20€. The bus depot in Burgos is at Calle Miranda 4 (www.alsa.es; ✆ **94-726-20-17**), which intersects the large Plaza de Vega, due south of (and across the river from) the cathedral.

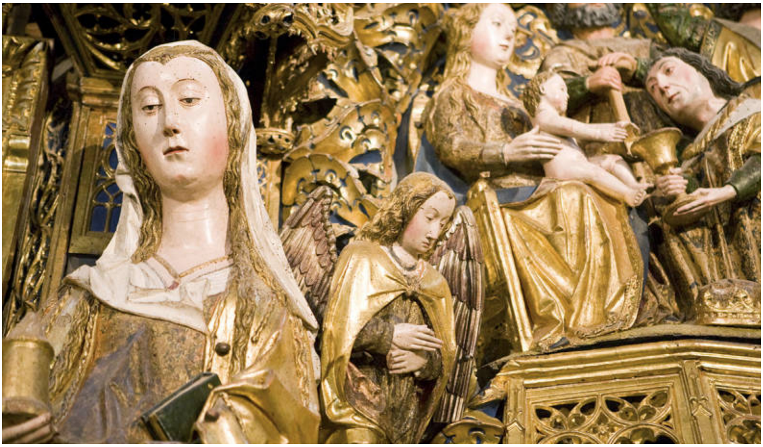
Burgos is well connected to its neighbors by a network of highways, but its routes to and from Barcelona (trip time: 6 hr.) are especially wide and modern. The road from Barcelona changes its name several times, from the A-2 to the A-68 to the E-4, but it is a superhighway all the way. From Madrid, follow the N-I north for about 3 hours; the highway is fast but less modern than the road from Barcelona. Burgos is a short drive (1 ½ hr.) from Bilbao.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza Alonso Martínez 7 (www.turismocastillayleon.com; ✆ **94-720-31-25**), is open July to September daily 9am to 8pm. From October to June it's open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 5pm.

Exploring Burgos

Casa de Cordón, the historic 15th-century palace on Plaza de Calvo Sotelo, has been restored and is now a bank. But you can still go by and take a look. History records that on April 23, 1497, Columbus met with Isabel and Fernando here after his second voyage to the New World. It was in this building, in 1506, that Felipe Hermoso (the Handsome) suffered a heart attack after a game of jai alai. In her grief, his wife, Juana, dragged his body through the streets of Burgos, earning the sobriquet Juana la Loca (the Mad).

Cartuja de Miraflores ★ CHURCH Located 4km (2½ miles) east of the center of Burgos, this florid Gothic charterhouse was founded in 1441. King Juan II selected it as the royal tomb for himself and his second wife, Isabel of Portugal. By 1494, the **church ★** was finished, its sober facade belying the treasure-trove of decoration inside. The stunning attraction of the interior is the **sculptured unit ★★★** in the apse, said to have been built with the first gold brought back



A detail from the altar of the Cartuja de Miraflores.

from the New World. This is a masterpiece of design, and the faithful often stand here for an hour or two taking in its stunning beauty. It was the work, in the late 1400s, of Gil de Siloé, who also designed the polychrome wood altarpiece. The remains of the king and queen lie in the white-marble mausoleum, designed like an eight-pointed star. The tomb's decorators gave these parents of Isabel I a fine send-off with exuberant, Flamboyant Gothic decorations such as cherubs, pinnacles, canopies, and scrolls.

Carretera de Burgos a Cardeña Km 3. www.cartuja.org. ☎ **94-725-25-86.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 10:15am–3pm and 4–6pm; Sun 11am–3pm and 4–6pm.

Catedral de Santa María ★★★ CATHEDRAL Begun in 1221, this cathedral was one of the most celebrated in Europe. Built in diverse styles (predominantly Flamboyant Gothic), it took 300 years to complete. Ornamented 15th-century bell towers flank the three main doorways by John of Cologne. The 16th-century **Chapel of Condestable,** behind the main altar, is one of the best examples of Isabelline-Gothic architecture, richly decorated with heraldic emblems, a sculptured filigree doorway, figures of apostles and saints, balconies, and an eight-sided-star stained-glass window.

Equally elegant are the two-story 14th-century **cloisters,** filled with fine Spanish Gothic sculpture. The cathedral's tapestries, including a well-known Gobelin, are rich in detail. In one of the chapels you'll see an old chest linked to the legend of El Cid—it was filled with gravel and used as collateral by the warrior to trick moneylenders. The remains of El Cid himself, together with those of his wife, Doña Ximena, lie under Santa María's octagonal, lanternlike dome. Finally, you might want to see the elaborate 16th-century **Stairway of Gold** in the north transept, the work of Diego de Siloé.

The cathedral is across the Arlanzón River from the railway station, midway between the river and the Citadel.

Plaza de Santa María s/n. www.catedraldeburgos.es. ☎ **94-720-47-12.** Admission to chapels, cloisters, and treasury 5€ adults, 4€ seniors, 3€ students, 1€ children 7–14, and free for children 6 and under. Summer daily 9:30am–7:15pm; spring and fall daily 9:30am–1:15pm and 4–7:15pm; winter daily 10am–1:15pm and 4–6:45pm.

Monasterio de Santa María la Real de las Huelgas ★★ MONASTERY This cloister outside Burgos has seen a lot of action. Built in the 12th century in a richly ornamented style, it was once a summer palace for Castilian royalty, as well as a retreat for nuns of royal blood. Inside, the Gothic church is built in the shape of a Latin cross. Despite unfortunate mixing of Gothic and baroque, it contains much of interest—notably some 14th- and 17th-century French tapestries. The tomb of the founder, Alfonso VIII, and of his queen Eleanor, the daughter of England's Henry II, lie in the Choir Room.

Thirteenth-century doors lead to the cloisters, dating from that century and blending Gothic and Mudéjar styles. Despite severe damage to the ceiling, the remains of Persian peacock designs are visible. The beautiful **Chapter Room** contains the standard of the 12th-century Las Navas de Tolora (war booty taken from the Moors). The **Museo de Ricas Telas** is devoted to 13th-century costumes removed from tombs; these remarkably preserved textiles give you a rare peek at medieval dress.

The monastery is 1.6km (1 mile) off the Valladolid road (the turnoff is clearly marked). From Plaza Primo de Rivera in Burgos, buses for Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas leave every 20 minutes.

Calle Compás de Adentro s/n. www.patrimonionacional.es. ☎ **94-720-16-30.** Admission 5€ adults, 2.50€ students and children 5–16. Tues–Sat 10am–1pm and 3:45–5:30pm; Sun 10:30am–2pm.

Where to Eat

The restaurants in the heart of Burgos, surrounding the cathedral, usually feature prices that soar as high as a Gothic spire. Every menu contains the roast lamb and suckling pig known throughout the area; or you might order *entremeses variados,* an appetizer sampler of many regional specialties.

Casa Ojeda ★ BURGALESE This top-notch restaurant combines excellent Burgos fare, cozy decor, attentive service, and moderate prices. Moorish tiles and low ceilings create an inviting ambience enhanced by intimate nooks, old lanterns, and intricate trelliswork. The cookery is the best in town. A la carte dishes include roast lamb, Basque-style hake, sole harlequin, and chicken in garlic. House specialties are *alubias con chorizo y morcilla* (small white beans with spicy sausages); *sopa castellano* (a garlicky soup); spit-roasted lamb; and various kinds of fresh fish, especially hake.

Calle Vitoria 5. www.restauranteojeda.com. ☎ **94-720-90-52.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm; Mon–Sat 9–11:30pm.

Fábula SPANISH Fábula features a colonial style room with thick masonry, dark and somewhat massive furnishings, and a sophisticated, market fresh cuisine served by an attentive staff. Dishes are filled with robust flavors, and you quickly realize that Burgos is within striking distance of the Basque coast. Good starters include crustacean salads, salmon tartare, or creamy rice with artisanal cheese from Burgos. The accomplished main dishes feature salted and deep-fried octopus beneath a cream of ragout of pink onions, and roasted pork with garbanzos, which is smothered with roasted pimentos and plantains. The two signature desserts are a flan of fresh cheese with artisanal honey from the District of Río Lobos and a mandarin sorbet drenched with sparkling Catalunyan cava.

La Puerta 18. www.restaurantefabula.com. ☎ **94-726-30-92.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–24€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 2–3:30pm and Tues–Sun 9–11pm.

Mesón del Cid ★ CASTILIAN You can be assured in Burgos that any establishment associating itself with El Cid aims to be old-fashioned without apology. This restaurant in a small hotel is no exception, with its hand-hewn beams and windows overlooking the cathedral. Burgos-style roast suckling lamb, tenderloin of beef with wild mushrooms in a red-wine sauce, and grilled red tuna with candied tomato and crisp leeks are typical of the main dishes. The restaurant does boast an excellent cellar, mostly of reds from the nearby La Rioja, Ribera del Duero, and the relatively new Arlanza D.O. in Burgos province.

Mesón del Cid also rents 56 bedrooms well furnished in traditional Castilian style. Doubles range in price from 70€ to 165€.

Plaza de Santa María 8. www.mesondelcid.es. ☎ **94-720-87-15.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–24€; tasting menus 26€–41€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm.

Rincón de España 🏷 SPANISH This restaurant, about 1 block southwest of the cathedral, is popular with small tour groups and independent travelers alike. You can eat in the dining room or outdoors under a large awning (closed off by glass when the weather is threatening). The restaurant offers *platos combinados,* as well as a more extensive a la carte menu. Special dishes include grilled steaks, roast suckling lamb, barbecued lamb cutlets with potatoes, and roast chicken with sweet peppers. The food here is good and the portions are large.

Nuño Rasura 11. www.rincondeespana.com. ✆ **94-720-59-55.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–18€; fixed-price menus 14€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed Mon–Tues night Jan–Mar.

Shopping

A city as old and historic as Burgos is chockablock with emporia selling almost infinite numbers of ceramics, woodcarvings, and artifacts that include fireplace bellows crafted from leather, wood, and brass or copper. Many shops line the edges of the city's most central square, the Plaza Mayor, and the streets radiating from it. One shop in particular, **Antigüedades Isla,** Calle Aparicio y Ruiz 17 (✆ **94-726-06-36**), is especially worthwhile, with an appealing mixture of old and new artifacts (many from France).

Where to Stay

Mesón del Cid (see above) also rents rooms.

EXPENSIVE

Landa Palace ★★★ One of the greatest hotels of Castilla, Landa Palace lies some 3km (1¾ miles) south of Burgos on N-1. A romantic getaway, it is in a handsomely restored castle from the 1300s, with later additions. Pilgrims once stopped here en route to Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, but they wouldn't recognize the grandeur of the place today. Decorated with tasteful antiques, the lobby sets the tone with its white marble and ornate coffered ceiling. Guest rooms are spacious and cozily inviting, with antique decorations and tile floors. Marble bathrooms are state of the art, with all the extras.

Carretera Madrid–Irún Km 235, 09001 Burgos. www.landahotel.com. ✆ **94-725-77-77.** Fax 94-726-46-76. 39 units. 170€–200€ double; 200€–290€ suite. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; 2 heated pools (1 indoor, 1 outdoor); room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Hotel Almirante Bonifaz Book a room here more for the price than for any grand comfort. It is clean and decent, though the small rooms don't invite lingering. Be aware that the hotel has a 300-seat bingo parlor downstairs that operates from 5pm until 3am, creating a certain amount of racket. The hotel is near the river in the commercial part of town.

Calle Vitoria 22–24, 09004 Burgos. www.almirantebonifaz.com. ✆ **94-720-69-43.** Fax 94-725-64-04. 79 units. 88€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 11€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar (in some), Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Rice ★ 🎁 Located .8km (½ mile) north of the center, this fine boutique hotel is imbued with charm, grace, and rather English character. Once you enter the British-style lobby, you'll feel snug, cozy, and comfortable, taking in the Queen Anne chairs, the marble surfaces, the antique cabinets, and the elegant fabrics. Guest rooms have elegant touches, with luxury mattresses and the best bathrooms in Burgos.

Av. Reyes Católicos 30, 09005 Burgos. www.hotelrice.com. ✆ **94-722-23-00.** Fax 94-722-35-50. 50 units. 56€–135€ double; from 83€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 9€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel España The best budget choice in town since 1937 is a 5-minute walk southeast of the cathedral and a block south of the Plaza Mayor. It stands on a leafy promenade filled with sidewalk cafes and Castilians taking early-evening strolls. The small guest rooms lack style and imagination but are completely comfortable, with good beds and tidy bathrooms. The management is helpful to visitors. ***Note:*** When the España is full, they have been known to call around to other hostelries for stranded tourists.

Paseo del Espolón 32, 09003 Burgos. ✆ **94-720-63-40.** Fax 94-720-13-30. 69 units. 50€–72€ double. MC, V. Closed Dec 20–Jan 20. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting. *In room:* TV.

A Side Trip to Santo Domingo de la Calzada ★

Pilgrims have streamed across northern Spain for nearly 1,000 years to reach Santiago de Compostela. If you want to see the pilgrimage route up close, make a day trip to Santo Domingo de la Calzada, 68km (42 miles) east of Burgos. The town was deliberately established by San Domingo in the 12th century as a stopover for pilgrims, and its core has changed little over the centuries. The national landmark 12th-century **cathedral** ★ (✆ **94-134-00-33**) is mostly Gothic and contains the crypt of its founder. A centuries-old legend is attached to the cathedral: Supposedly a cooked rooster stood up from the dinner table and crowed to protest the innocence of a pilgrim who had been accused of theft and sentenced to hang. To this day, a live cock and hen are kept in a cage up on the church wall, and you can often hear the rooster crowing at Mass. The cathedral is open March to December Monday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 6:30pm. Admission is 3.50€ adults, 2.50€ ages 8 to 18, and free for everyone on Sunday for Mass. Motorists can reach Santo Domingo de la Calzada by following either of the traffic arteries paralleling the river, heading west from the Burgos cathedral until signs indicate N-120. If you want to stay the night, you can't do better than the **Parador de Santo Domingo** ★★★, Plaza del Santo 3 (www.parador.es; ✆ **94-134-03-00;** 103€–160€ double). Built next to the cathedral in the 12th century as a hostelry for pilgrims, its modern rich linens, lofty beds, and spacious rooms make it anything but ascetic.

LEÓN ★★

327km (203 miles) NW of Madrid, 196km (122 miles) N of Salamanca

Once the leading city of Christian Spain, León has one of the greatest, most inspiring Gothic cathedrals in Europe. The city was long the capital of a great feudal kingdom that went into eclipse after uniting with Castilla. Today it serves as a gateway between old Castilla and the routes to Galicia. The modern city sprawls, but the most important monuments, restaurants, and hotels can all be covered on foot.

Outlying mountain villages offer their own architectural gems, fine ski runs, and tasty concoctions of local trout and meat. Like Burgos, the region is renowned for its soft-spoken, pristine Castellano Spanish. In sum, León is an excellent place to experience the tranquillity of the Spanish heartland, as well as an obligatory stop for students of medieval architecture.

Essentials

GETTING THERE León has good rail connections to the rest of Spain—10 **trains** daily from Madrid (trip time: 3–4½ hr.). The station, Estación del Norte, Av. de Astorga 2 (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), is on the western bank of the Bernesga River. Cross the bridge near Plaza de Guzmán el Bueno. A one-way ticket from Madrid ranges from 35€ to 45€.

Most of León's **buses** arrive and depart from the Estación de Autobuses, Paseo Ingeniero Sáenz de Miera (✆ **98-721-10-00**). Three to five buses per day link León with Zamora and Salamanca, and there are 11 per day from Madrid (trip time: 4¼ hr.). A one-way ticket on a direct regular bus from Madrid is 28€ to 43€ for the *supra* (comfortable) service. For more information on prices, call ✆ **90-242-22-42.**

León lies at the junction of five major highways coming from five different regions of Spain. From Madrid's periphery, head northwest on the N-VI superhighway toward A Coruña. At Benavente, bear right onto the N-630.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza de la Regla 3 (www.turismocastillayleon.com; ✆ **98-723-70-82**), is open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 5pm. From July to mid-September, the office remains open during lunch hours.

Exploring León

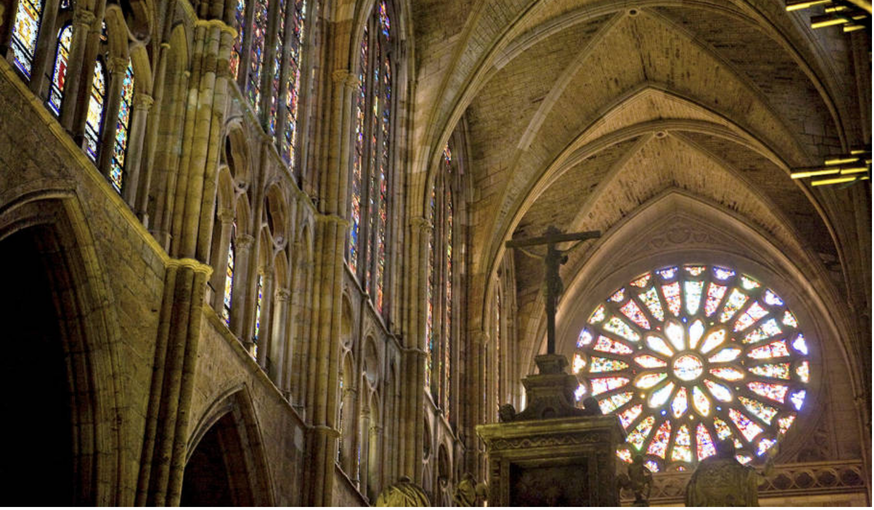
Catedral de León (Santa María de Regla) ★★★ CATHEDRAL The usual cathedral elements are virtually eclipsed here by the awesome **stained-glass windows ★★★**—some 125 in all (plus 57 oculi), dating from the 13th century. They are so heavy they have strained the cathedral's walls. Look for a

Luminous in León

In the church-building frenzy of the Middle Ages, every Gothic cathedral vied to distinguish itself with some superlative trait. Milan Cathedral was the biggest, Chartres had the most inspiring stained-glass windows, Palma de Mallorca had the largest rose window, and so on.

Structurally, though, the boldest cathedral was at León. This edifice set the record for the highest proportion of window space, with stained-glass windows soaring 34m (112 ft.) to the vaulted ceiling, framed by the slenderest of columns. The windows occupied 1,672 sq. m (nearly 18,000 sq. ft.), or almost all the space where you'd expect the walls to be.

The roof is held up not by walls but by flying buttresses on the exterior. Inside, the profusion of light and the illusion of weightlessness astonish even medievalists. The architects (Juan Pérez and Maestro Enrique) who designed the cathedral in the 13th century were, in effect, precursors of architect Mies van der Rohe, 7 centuries before the age of steel girders draped with plate-glass curtain walls.



The stained glass of the Catedral de León.

15th-century **altarpiece** ★ depicting the Entombment in the Capilla Mayor, as well as a Renaissance *trascoro* (westward portion of the nave) by Juan de Badajoz. The nave dates from the 13th and 14th centuries; the Renaissance vaulting is much later. The **cloisters** ★ date in part from the 13th and 14th centuries and contain faded frescoes and Romanesque and Gothic tombs; some capitals are carved with starkly lifelike scenes. Visitors can also tour the **Museo Catedralicio Diocesano de León,** which contains valuable art and artifacts, including a 10th-century Bible, notable sculptures, and a collection of Romantic images of the Virgin Mary. The cathedral is on the edge of Old Town, 7 blocks east of its most central square, Plaza de Santo Domingo.

Plaza de Regla. www.catedraldeleon.org. ✆ **98-787-57-70.** Admission to cathedral free; museum 4€; cloisters 1€. Cathedral July–Sept Mon–Sat 9:30am–2pm and 4–7:30pm; Oct–June Mon–Fri 9:30am–1:30pm and 4–7pm, Sat 9:30am–1:30pm. Museum Mon–Fri 9:30am–1:30pm and 4–7pm; Sat 9:30am–1:30pm. Bus: 4.

The rainbow windows of MUSAC.

MUSAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León) ☺ ART MUSEUM Stained glass decorates the structures that house this avant-garde museum, but their artistry is hardly that of the caliber of the famous cathedral. The concept, though, is what matters. The same is true of most exhibitions here; one recent display, for example, depicted a car wreck. Billing itself as the "Museum of the 21st Century," MUSAC offers much more than its changing exhibitions. It also sponsors movies and concerts, as well as a program of workshops and various activities aimed at kids.

Av. de los Reyes Leoneses 24. www.musac.org.es. ✆ **98-709-00-00.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 10am–3pm and 5–8pm; Sat–Sun 11am–3pm and 5–9pm. Bus: 7 or 11.

Real Colegiata de San Isidoro ★ CHURCH The Leónese boast that "León had 24 kings before Castilla even had laws." Eleven of them (along with 14 queens and a bunch of other nobles) are entombed here in the 12th-century burial vault, a marvelously spooky Romanesque room with fanciful ceiling frescoes of biblical scenes and court life. The church is no slouch either. The treasury has some rare finds—10th-century Scandinavian ivory, an 11th-century chalice, and an important collection of 10th- to 12th-century fabrics from Asia. The library museum contains many ancient manuscripts and rare books, including a Book of Job from 951, a Visigothic Bible, and a Bible from 1162, plus dozens of miniatures.

Plaza San Isidoro 4. www.sanisidorodeleon.net. ✆ **98-787-61-61.** Admission to church free; Pantheon and museum 4€. Church daily 7am–11pm. Pantheon and museum July–Aug Mon–Sat 9am–8pm, Sun 9am–2pm; Sept–June Mon–Sat 10am–1:30pm and 4–6:30pm, Sun 10am–1:30pm. Bus: 4 or 9.

Where to Eat

Bodega Regia CASTILIAN León is famous among chefs worldwide for its cured meats, and this bodega in a restored 14th-century building near the cathedral is a perfect place to sample them. If weather permits, sit outside in the central garden amid the tropical plants and the late-medieval architecture. Be sure to sample the dried beef (*cecina de León*) as an appetizer. Aficionados consider it on a par with Andalucía's air-dried *jamón ibérico*. The menu includes *embutidos de León,* a local sausage that is extremely tasty, as well as *pimientos de Bierzo con vinagre de Jerez* (grilled local red peppers sauced with sherry vinegar). Another popular sausage is *morcilla de León y picadillo,* an exceptional treat. *Bacalao a la leonesa* is salt cod cooked with green peppers, tomatoes, and bay leaf.

In the Posada Regia, Regidores 9–11. www.regialeon.com. ✆ **98-721-31-73.** Main courses 12€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:45–3:45pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed 15 days in Jan and 15 days in Sept.

La Formela ★★ CASTILIAN Five minutes from the historic district and next to the San Marcos, La Formela gives travelers a little relief from the crowds and tourist menus designed to appeal to impecunious pilgrims. The warm and inviting restaurant on the second floor of the Hotel Quindós is owned by Jaime Quindós, a well-known art collector and former gallery owner. The fare is classical Leónese and includes a wonderful red-deer casserole (*ciervo estofado*), a sauté of fresh vegetables and potatoes (*revuelto de León con patatas*), and roasted sea bass (*lubina*). The wine list is very strong on Rioja reds and vivacious Galician whites. For dessert, the kitchen will prepare a simple crêpe suzette or serve you a homey vanilla-scented custard (*natillas caseras*). To go with brandy, you might want to have a look at the extensive menu of fine cigars.

Gran Vía San Marcos 38. ✆ **98-722-45-34.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–26€; fixed-price menu 22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Jan.

Shopping

Something about León's architecture encourages buying handcrafts made from time-honored materials like terra cotta, stone, copper, wrought iron, and leather.

The Plaza de la Catedral and the streets that radiate from it are jammed with kiosks that stock these items, and part of the fun of a trip within the city's historic core involves buying several pieces. For a more up-to-date roster of shopping options, consider a quick march through the vast stacks in León's biggest department store, **El Corte Inglés,** Fray Luis de León 29 (www.elcorteingles.es; ✆ **98-726-31-00**).

Entertainment & Nightlife

Few other cities in Spain evoke the mystery of the Middle Ages like León. To best appreciate the old-fashioned eloquence of the city, wander after dark around the Plaza Mayor, the edges of which are peppered with simple cafes and bars. None is particularly distinct from its neighbor, but overall the effect is rich, evocative, and wonderfully conducive to conversation and romance. One of the best places for drinks is **León Antiguo,** Plaza del Cid 16 (no phone), which is open Monday to Wednesday 7pm to midnight and Thursday to Saturday 7pm to 4am. Alcoholic drinks cost 2€ to 5€.

Where to Stay

Hotel Alfonso V ★ This mid-20th-century hotel has been modernized with self-consciously contemporary decor, including a striking sculpture-filled lobby that rises seven wavy stories to a glass roof. Rooms (mostly midsize) are decorated with a minimum of fussiness—all modern color blocks, unadorned surfaces, and *modernista* furniture. They also have casement windows and excellent soundproofing.

Padre Isla 1, 24002 León. www.lesein.es/alfonsov. ✆ **98-722-09-00.** Fax 98-722-12-44. 62 units. 70€–90€ double; 125€–186€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel París 🏷 Lying between the old and new towns, this renovated hotel east of Plaza Santo Domingo lures you with Belle Epoque touches and a warm, inviting atmosphere. The intimate guest rooms are comfortable, making it a cozy nest for León sightseeing.

Calle Ancha 18, 24003 León. www.hotelparisleon.com. ✆ **98-723-86-00.** Fax 98-727-15-72. 55 units. 73€–78€ double; 90€–96€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Posada Regia 🎁 Two completely restored Leónese buildings from the 14th and 19th centuries have been turned into this boutique hotel of charm and tradition. In the heart of the historic city, the main building and its equally charming annex offer completely different decor for every room, each traditionally furnished. The use of satin and exposed-brick walls dominates, and primary, very vivid colors such as red or green are used. Expect to find antique furniture and wide beds, along with spacious bathrooms, most of which have corner bathtubs. Many romantics, especially couples, prefer the top-floor rooms under the eaves.

Regidores 11, 24003 León. www.regialeon.com. ✆ **98-721-31-73.** Fax 98-721-30-31. 36 units. 90€–120€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free, in most rooms).

Parador de León/Hostal San Marcos ★★★ Don't set your heart on staying here, as this 16th-century former monastery with its celebrated Plateresque facade is one of the most heavily booked *paradores* in Spain. The government remodeled it at great expense, installing extravagant authentic antiques and quality reproductions, as well as restoring the 16th-century facade. Before its monastery days, the old *hostal* put up pilgrims bound for Santiago de Compostela in the 12th century. The *parador* also contains a church with a scallop-shell facade and an archaeological museum. The good-size guest rooms are sumptuous, each with a bathroom equipped with a tub/shower combo. The *parador* is northwest of the cathedral on the outskirts of Old Town, on the east bank of the Bernesga River. Plaza de San Marcos 7, 24001 León. www.parador.es. ✆ **98-723-73-00.** Fax 98-723-34-58. 226 units. 120€–190€ double; 376€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

ZAMORA ★

64km (40 miles) N of Salamanca, 238km (148 miles) NW of Madrid

Almost unknown to North American visitors, **Zamora** is one of the most exciting cities in Castilla for architecture buffs. In fact, Zamora is often called a "Romanesque museum." Built on the Duero River plain as the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain, it retains two dozen churches from the 12th and 13th centuries—a reminder that Castilla won back turf with the cross as well as the sword.

You can race through Zamora's highlights in about 4 hours. Stroll along the main square, dusty Plaza Canovas; cross the arched Romanesque bridge from the 1300s; and take in a few of the Romanesque churches for which the town is known. The voluminous 13th-century cathedral is the best example, but others include **Iglesia de la Magdalena,** on Rúa de los Francos, and **Parroquia de San Ildefonso,** on Calle Ramos Carrión. You might also want to look at **Iglesia de Santa María la Nueva,** on Plaza de Santa María, and **Iglesia de Santiago el Burgo,** on Calle Santa Clara.

The crowning achievement, however, at the far west end of Zamora, is the **Catedral San Salvador ★**, Plaza de la Catedral (✆ **98-053-06-44**). It is topped by a gold-and-white Eastern-looking **dome ★**. Inside, you'll find rich hangings, interesting chapels, two 15th-century Mudéjar pulpits, and intricately carved **choir stalls ★★**. Later architectural styles, including Gothic, have been added to the original Romanesque features, but this indiscriminate mixing of periods is typical of Spanish cathedrals. Inside the cloister, the **Museo de la Catedral** features ecclesiastical art, historical documents, church documents, and an unusual collection of **"Black Tapestries" ★★** dating from the 1400s. These priceless Flemish tapestries tell the story of the Trojan War and are called "black" because some of their subjects are people about to be decapitated. Admission to the cathedral is free, but the museum costs 3€. The museum and cathedral are open April to September Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. Off-season hours are Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 2pm and 4:30 to 6:30pm.

Essentials

GETTING THERE There are two **trains** to and from Madrid every day, and two to and from A Coruña (trip times: 3 hr. and 6 hr., respectively). The railway station is at Calle Alfonso Peña (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), about a

The "Black Tapestries" of the Catedral San Salvador.

15-minute walk from the edge of Old Town. Follow Avenida de las Tres Cruces northeast of the center of town. One-way fare from Madrid to Zamora is 31€ to 47€.

Ten to twenty-three **bus** connections a day from Salamanca make this the easiest way to get in and out of town (trip time: 1 hr.). There are six buses a day from Madrid (trip time: 3½ hr.), with a fare of 16€ to 25€. The town's bus station lies a few paces from the railway station, at Calle Alfonso Peña 3 (✆ **98-052-12-81**). Call ✆ **90-202-00-52** for bus schedules and price information.

Zamora is at the junction of eight different roads and highways. Most of the traffic from northern Portugal into Spain comes through here. Highways headed north to León, south to Salamanca, and east to Valladolid are especially convenient. From Madrid, take the A-6 superhighway northwest toward Valladolid, cutting west on the N-VI and west again at the turnoff onto 122.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza de Arias Gonzalo 6 (www.ayto-zamora.org; ✆ **98-053-36-94**), is open daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS **Holy Week,** the week before Easter, is a celebration throughout the country. Street processions, called *pasos,* in Zamora are among the most spectacular in Spain. If you plan to visit at this time, make your hotel reservations well in advance.

Where to Eat

El Rincón de Antonio ★★ SPANISH Set about a block southwest of Old Town's most visible square, Plaza Viriato, within a thick-walled 19th-century building whose angular design evokes old Castilla at its most historic, this well-known restaurant somehow manages to incorporate aspects of both antique and ultracontemporary New Spain. The old-fashioned professionalism makes it a pleasure to dine here, and many locals consider it a special-occasion restaurant. There are crowded and convivial dining areas in the main building, as well as a greenhouse-style dining extension jutting into the garden. Contemporary takes on Spanish classics shift constantly with seasons, and tend to draw heavily on local produce—both farmed and foraged. (Mushrooms are important here in spring and fall.) Sample the chef's clean and witty style at the bar by ordering the tapas tasting menu of four miniature plates, wine, dessert, and coffee.

Rúa de los Francos 6. www.elrincondeantonio.com. ✆ **98-053-53-70.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 30€–40€; fixed-price menus 32€–55€; tapas tasting menu 11€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–4pm; Mon–Sat 8pm–midnight.

Serafín SPANISH At the northeast edge of the Old Town, Serafín combines the best of Castilian meat cookery with a love of cold-water fish from the Cantabrian coast. The house seafood stew is a Spanish take on bouillabaisse, and the kitchen excels at the regional rice specialty, *arroz a la zamorana*—short-grained rice cooked with cured pork parts and lots of sweet paprika. In season, you'll also find roast leg of milk-fed lamb, frog legs, and sweet river crab. What you will not find is a lot of patience in the waitstaff trying to explain the distinctive Zamoran cooking to non-Spanish speakers.

Plaza Maestro Haedo 10. www.restauranteserafin.com. ✆ **98-053-14-22.** Main courses 12€–20€; fixed-price menu 17€. AE, DC, MC, V. Fri–Wed 1–4:30pm and 8:30pm–midnight.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Calle Los Herreros, also called Calle de Vinos, has 16 or so bars—more than enough to kill the evening if you have a leisurely glass of wine and a tapa at each. The narrow street is at the southern end of the Old City, about 2 blocks north of the Duero River, within the shadow of the Ayuntamiento Viejo (Old Town Hall), a block south of Plaza Mayor.

Where to Stay

Hostería Real de Zamora ★ An excellent example of a tastefully modernized aristocratic villa, this charming small hotel stands a few steps to the west of the northern embankment of the city's much-photographed Stone Bridge. The midsize guest rooms contain good beds, and the modern bathrooms are equipped with tub/shower combos. This charming small hotel sports walls that date from the 1400s and occupies the long-ago headquarters of Zamora's dreaded Inquisition. (Ironically, this is the former site of a Jewish-owned building reputed to have been the home of the conquistador Pizarro.) Today, the remaining historical features of the building include a medieval cistern, a patio perfect for enjoying a cup of tea or coffee, and a verdant garden along the city's medieval fortifications. If you drive to the hotel, you'll have to rely on limited street parking.

Cuesta de Pizarro 7, 49027 Zamora. www.hosteriasreales.com/hosteria4.htm. ✆/fax **98-053-45-45.** 24 units. 70€–90€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; Jacuzzi. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Zamora ★★ This is the grand address for Zamora, a tranquil and charming *parador* that fairly oozes history. The site was originally fortified as an *alcazaba* by the Moors during their occupation of Zamora before being rebuilt in 1459 by the count of Alva y Aliste. Today the structure retains the severe, high-ceilinged dignity of its 15th-century Gothic form. Set 2 blocks south of Plaza Mayor, near the junction of Plaza de Viriato and Calle Ramos Carrión, the *parador* is richly decorated with medieval armor, antique furniture, tapestries, and potted plants. In winter, glass partitions close off a large inner patio centered on an antique well; baronial fireplaces provide much-appreciated warmth. Midsize rooms have white walls and tasteful if severely conservative furniture.

Plaza de Viriato 5, 49001 Zamora. www.parador.es. ✆ **98-051-44-97.** Fax 98-053-00-63. 52 units. 155€ double; 233€ double superior. AE, DC, MC, V. Hotel open-air parking 10€; garage parking 22€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

A Side Trip to Toro

Just a 40-minute drive east of Zamora on the A-11, **Toro** ★ is a spectacularly well-preserved medieval city that highlights the third strategy Castilian kings used in the Reconquest of their lands from the Moors. Equal to the sword and the cross was the vine. Building on those first 11th-century plantings, Toro has become the heart of its own D.O. wine district, and ever since scientific winemakers began to tame the powerful *tinto de Toro* grape (a strain of Tempranillo) in the 1980s, the biggest names in Spanish viticulture have flocked to the area to establish vineyards. Some of the best Toro wines are made by **Bodegas Fariña,** and are named for the most beautiful church in town, the **Colegiata.** Toro's single main street is lined with shops offering free tastings and selling the local wines—so many that if you're not careful, you'll be woozy by the time you get to that 13th-century Colegiata, officially **Santa María la Mayor,** located (of course) on Plaza Santa María (no phone; Mon–Fri 10am–2pm and 5–8pm, Sat 10am–2pm). Ironically, you enter the church from the rear so officials can charge a 1€ admission (except during Mass). They do so because the main entrance, the **Pórtico de la Majestad (Portal of Majesty)** ★★★, is one of the most magnificent examples of Gothic stone carving in Spain and you have to go through the church and back out to view it. The carved figures of the Last Judgment—all still painted in sun-blasted pastels—reveal something of the carver's theology: First to be saved, even before the Virgins and the Martyrs, are the musicians. Playa Mayor is full of bars and restaurants under the arcades in case you want to enjoy a glass of wine and a light meal before leaving town.

SALAMANCA ★★★

204km (127 miles) NW of Madrid, 118km (73 miles) E of Portugal

This ancient city, famous for its university founded by Alfonso IX in the early 1200s, is well preserved, with turreted palaces, faded convents, and Romanesque churches. Still, it remains a youthful, spirited place because venerable Salamanca University attracts scholars and students from all over the world—including a large contingent of Americans in summer—and their inquiring minds also go out to play. In its day, Salamanca ranked with Oxford, Paris, and Bologna as one of "the four leading lights of the medieval world."

Although Salamanca's population exceeds 180,000, a provincial aura lingers in the compact central Old City. Since most attractions are within walking distance of Plaza Mayor, the best way to explore Salamanca is on foot. Arm yourself with a good map (available at the tourist office; see below) and set out to discover this UNESCO World Heritage city.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Seven **trains** travel directly from Madrid's North station to Salamanca daily (trip time: 2½ hr.), arriving northeast of the town center on Plaza de la Estación de Ferrocarril (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). The fare is 20€. More frequent are the rail connections between Salamanca, Ávila, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Valladolid (around six trains each per day).

There's frequent daily **bus** service from Madrid (trip time: 2½ hr.). Salamanca's bus terminal is at Av. Filiberto Villalobos 71 (✆ **92-322-60-79**), northwest of the town center. There are also buses to Salamanca from Ávila, Zamora, Valladolid, León, and Cáceres (2–13 per day, depending on point of departure).

Salamanca isn't on a national highway, but roads converge here from such nearby cities as Ávila, Valladolid, and Ciudad Rodrigo. One of the most heavily trafficked highways is the N-620, leading into Salamanca from both Barcelona and Portugal. From Madrid, take the N-VI northwest, forking off to Salamanca on the N-501.

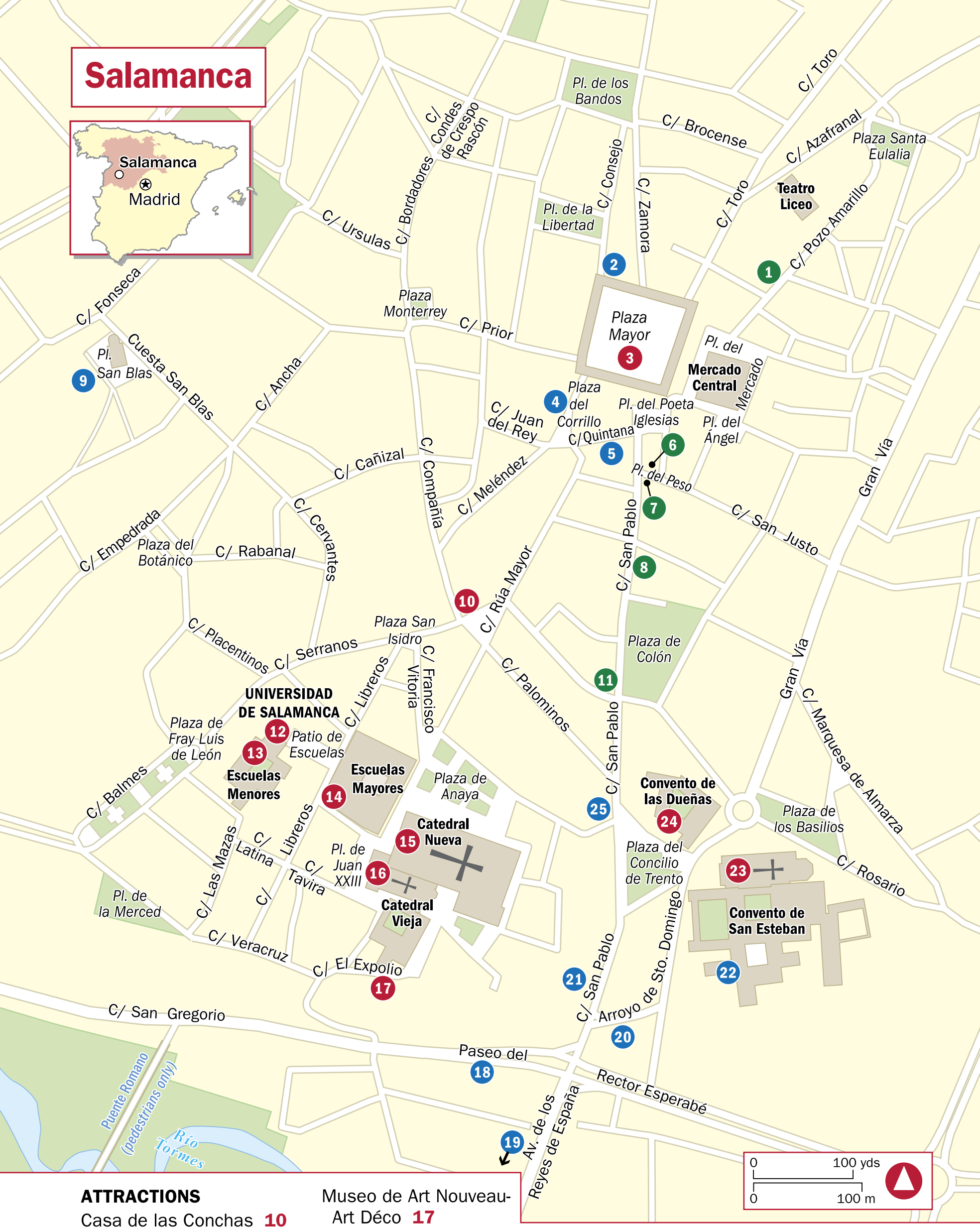
VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza Mayor 32 (www.aytosalamanca.es; ✆ **92-321-83-42**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 8pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Salamanca

To start, explore the **Plaza Mayor** ★★★, an 18th-century baroque square often nominated as one of Spain's most beautiful. No trip to this university town is complete unless you walk through the arcade of shops and feast your eyes on the honey-colored buildings. After this you'll understand why the Plaza Mayor, a town's main square, is an integral part of Spanish life. If it's a hot day and you want what everybody else in Plaza Mayor is drinking, stop at a cafe and order *leche helada,* a very refreshing vanilla-and-almond ice milk. Be sure to return in the evenings, when cafe tables spill out under the arcades and ***tunas***—bands of student songsters in academic regalia—wander table to table singing for tips.

Before reaching Plaza Mayor, you may want to admire the facade of the landmark **Casa de las Conchas (House of Shells),** which appears as you walk north from the Patio de las Escuelas (site of the Universidad de Salamanca; p. 218) on calles de Libreros and San Isidro. This restored 1483 house at the corner of Calle Rúa Mayor and Calle de la Compañía 2 (✆ **92-326-93-17**) is noted for its facade of 400 simulated scallop shells, the symbol of Santiago, patron saint of the

Salamanca's main square, the Plaza Mayor.


Salamanca
Salamanca
Madrid
Pl. de los Bandos
C/ Toro
C/ Brocense
C/ Azafranal
Plaza Santa Eulalia
Teatro Liceo
C/ Pozo Amarillo
C/ Toro
C/ Zamora
C/ Consejo
Pl. de la Libertad
C/ Condes de Crespo Rascón
C/ Bordadores
C/ Ursulas
C/ Fonseca
Plaza Monterrey
C/ Prior
Plaza Mayor
Pl. del Mercado
Mercado Central
Pl. San Blas
Cuesta San Blas
C/ Ancha
Plaza del Corrillo
C/ Juan del Rey
Pl. del Poeta Iglesias
C/ Quintana
Pl. del Ángel
Pl. del Peso
Gran Vía
C/ Cañizal
C/ Compañía
C/ Meléndez
C/ San Justo
C/ Cervantes
C/ Empedrada
Plaza del Botánico
C/ Rabanal
C/ San Pablo
C/ Rúa Mayor
Plaza San Isidro
C/ Placentinos
C/ Serranos
C/ Francisco Vitoria
C/ Palominos
Plaza de Colón
Gran Vía
UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA
C/ Libreros
Plaza de Fray Luis de León
Patio de Escuelas
Escuelas Menores
Escuelas Mayores
Plaza de Anaya
C/ San Pablo
Convento de las Dueñas
C/ Marquesa de Almarza
Plaza de los Basilios
C/ Balmes
Catedral Nueva
Plaza del Concilio de Trento
C/ Rosario
C/ Latina
C/ Libreros
Pl. de Juan XXIII
C/ Las Mazas
C/ Tavira
Catedral Vieja
Convento de San Esteban
Pl. de la Merced
C/ Veracruz
C/ El Expolio
C/ Sto. Domingo
C/ San Pablo
Arroyo de
C/ San Gregorio
Paseo del
Rector Esperabé
Puente Romano (pedestrians only)
Río Tormes
Av. de los Reyes de España
0 100 yds
0 100 m
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

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Reconquest. A medical professor at the university created the house as a monument to Santiago de Compostela, the pilgrimage site. You can visit the courtyard for free Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm, Saturday 9am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm, and Sunday 5 to 8pm.

Casa Museo Unamuno HISTORIC HOME It's worth visiting this modest 18th-century home to appreciate the heroism of mild-mannered poet, philosopher, novelist, and university rector Miguel de Unamuno. He lived here until he was forced into exile by dictator Primo de Rivera for refusing to bend scholarship to government orders, then returned when de Rivera's government fell in the 1930s. The library of great books in dozens of languages is instructive, but most moving are the personal photographs of Unamuno with some of the intellectual and political leading lights of the early 20th century. For many Spaniards, he represented a decency, humanity, sensitivity, and love of intellect that was crushed by the outbreak of the Civil War.

Calle de Libreros 25. ✆ **92-329-44-00.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students. Tues–Fri 9:30am–1:30pm and 4–6pm; Sat–Sun 10:30am–1:30pm. Last tours leave 30 min. before closing time. Bus: 1.

Catedral Nueva (New Cathedral) ★★ CATHEDRAL It took more than 200 years to complete the structure of the "new" cathedral, begun in 1513 and consecrated in 1733, and it's not a stretch to say that some of the exterior ornament isn't finished yet. Look very closely at the tangled leaves and vines surrounding the west entrance, and you'll find stone renderings of an astronaut, a monkey with an ice-cream cone, and a stork carrying a branch in its beak. They were added in 1992 in the tradition of visual puzzles found all over Salamanca. Even the Archdiocese of Salamanca has a sense of humor.

The cathedral's structure represents a final gasp of the Gothic style in Spain, but baroque and Plateresque features crept in during the long construction, and the Churriguera brothers (José Bénito, Joaquín, and Alberto) contributed their signature rococo elements.

Like many Salamanca structures, the building is constructed of soft golden sandstone that lends itself to intricate stone carving. The building has elegant chapels, the beautifully decorated dome, and bas-relief columns that look like a palm-tree cluster. Unfortunately, its stained glass is severely damaged. The cathedral lies in the southern section of the Old Town, about 5 blocks south of Plaza Mayor at the edge of Plaza de Anaya.

Plaza Juan XXII. www.catedralsalamanca.org. ✆ **92-321-74-76.** Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 9am–8pm; Oct and Mar daily 9am–1pm and 4–6pm; Nov–Feb Sun 9am–1pm. Bus: 1.

Catedral Vieja (Old Cathedral) ★★ CATHEDRAL It is tempting to think that Salamanca built a new cathedral because it ran out of room to bury local nobles and bishops in the old one, a stout Romanesque structure begun in 1140. Its simplicity contrasts dramatically with the ornamentation of its younger but bigger counterpart. In the main apsidal chapel is an **altarpiece ★★★**, painted by Nicholas of Florence in the mid–15th century, consisting of 53 beautifully decorated compartments. Even today this work of art remains fresh and vivid, and it is common to encounter pilgrims who will pray before it for hours at a time, apparently saying a prayer for each of the scenes. After viewing the interior, stroll through the enclosed cloisters with their Gothic tombs of long-forgotten bishops. The **chapels** are of special architectural interest. In the Capilla de San

Martín, the frescoes date from 1242, and in the Capilla de Santa Bárbara, final exams for Salamanca University students were given. The Capilla de Santa Catalina is noted for its gargoyles.

Plaza Juan XXIII. www.catedralsalamanca.org. ✆ **92-321-74-76.** Admission 4.80€. Apr–Sept daily 10am–7:30pm; Oct–Mar daily 10am–12:30pm and 4–5:30pm. Bus: 1.

Cielo de Salamanca 🎁 MUSEUM Pop into the darkened gallery off the plaza between the graduate and undergraduate schools of the university to see this mesmerizing art treasure. In 1473, Francisco Gallego painted this grand fresco of the night sky on the vault of the old university library. Only in Salamanca could such a work have been created, for it set out to reconcile myth, religion, and science by painting astronomical science of the day in a mythic astrological framework. The mural has faded and become damaged over the centuries, but retains its magic, perhaps because viewers have to sit or stand quietly in the dark until their eyes adjust.

Patio de Escuelas Menores s/n. No phone. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–8pm; Sun 10am–2pm.

Convento de las Dueñas ★★ 🎁 CONVENT Lucky for you, the cloistered Dominican nuns here open the arcaded cloister and fragrant rose garden of their 15th-century convent to visitors. Located behind the more prominent Convento de San Esteban (where the monks live), the 16th-century **cloister** designed by Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón is a hidden treasure of Salamanca. The capitals and pillars of the arcade are covered with some of the city's most florid stone carvings. The imagery of tales from the Bible as well as angels, griffins, winged horses, flying goat heads, and deliciously malevolent devils is so vivid that visitors wonder how the poor nuns can sleep at night.

Plaza del Concilio de Trento s/n. ✆ **92-321-54-42.** Admission 1.50€. Mon–Fri 10:30am–12:45pm and 4:30–6:45pm; Sat 10:30am–12:45pm.

Museo de Art Nouveau–Art Déco ART MUSEUM Given Salamanca's history as a stone-carving city with a taste for the fanciful and grotesque, this museum could not have found a better home. It contains more than 1,500 pieces, all part of the collection of the Manuel Ramos Andrade Foundation. Dating from the late 19th century to the 1930s, the collection includes bronze and marble figurines, jewelry, furniture, paintings, and a collection of some 300 porcelain dolls. Numerous works by Emile Gallé and René Lalique are also on display.

The Universidad de Salamanca's facade.

The Undaunted Fray Luis

In front of the Plateresque facade of the University of Salamanca, a statue honors Hebrew scholar Fray Luis de León. Arrested for heresy because he translated the *Song of Solomon* in the vernacular, Fray Luis was detained for 5 years before being cleared. When he returned, he began his first lecture: "As we were saying yesterday . . ." Fray Luis's remains are kept in the chapel, which is worth a look.

El Expolio 14. www.museocasalis.org. ✆ **92-312-14-25.** Admission 4€ adults, 2€ students, free for children 13 and under. Apr–Oct 15 Tues–Fri 11am–2pm and 5–9pm, Sat–Sun 11am–9pm; Oct 16–Mar Tues–Fri 11am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sat–Sun 11am–8pm. Bus: 1.

Universidad de Salamanca HISTORIC SITE The oldest university in Spain was once one of Europe's leading intellectual centers. No other Spanish university has such a **grand entrance ★★★**. Dating from 1534, the entryway is a splendid piece of sculpture, intricate in its detail. It is said the architects carved this "doorway to heaven" in emulation of a goldsmith's art. The main medallion in the first register depicts the Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando, who supplied the cost of creating this work of art. But the crowds gathered in front and pointing are not interested in Isabel and Fernando. They are scouring the intricate carvings on the right side of the portal, looking for the elusive frog perched on a human skull. Legend holds that students who can spot it will do well on their exams. The *rana* (frog) has become a whimsical if unofficial symbol of Salamanca—its likeness is emblazoned on everything from tote bags to key chains to cigarette lighters to shot glasses.

Unless you are enrolled at the university, only a few rooms are open to general visitors. Included among them is a dim 16th-century classroom fitted with crude wooden benches—it was where Fray Luis de León made his wry pronouncement (see above). The library upstairs can't be entered but can be viewed through a glass door, and it's an impressive sight. The university is 2 blocks from the cathedral in the southern section of Old Town.

Patio de las Escuelas 1. www.usal.es. ✆ **92-329-44-00.** Admission 4€. Mon–Fri 9:30am–1pm and 4–7pm; Sat 9:30am–1pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun 9am–1pm. Enter from Patio de las Escuelas, a widening of Calle de Libreros. Bus: 1.

Where to Eat

MODERATE

Casa Paca ★ CASTILIAN Salamancans have flocked to the traditional dining room at Casa Paca since 1928 for the specialties of roast kid and roast suckling pig. The restaurant also serves the ancient Castilian dish of *alubias*—beans stewed with pig tails and ears—on Fridays, but fans of thick meaty soups can order the traditional *cocido* (stew) any day. Light eaters might be better served drinking and eating on the bar side. Beer and wine are slightly more expensive at meal times (about 3€), but each drink comes with a choice of hearty tapas—everything from marinated anchovies to potato omelet to little casseroles of meatballs.

Plaza del Peso 10. www.casapaca.com. ✆ **923-21-89-93.** Main courses 12€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 2–4:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Bar daily 11am–midnight.

El Candil CASTILIAN University students treat El Candil as a perfect date restaurant—affordable but a cut above the usual cheap eats. The fare includes red peppers stuffed with salt cod and mashed potatoes, fried *merluza* (hake) with a side order of sweet peppers, and the ubiquitous fork-tender roast piglet. The house version of *farinato*—the Salamancan version of a sausage, with more bread crumbs than pork—makes a good first course.

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera 14–16. www.elcandil.info. ☎ **92-321-72-39.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–24€; fixed-price menu 49€. AE, DC, MC, V. Restaurant Mon 1–4pm; Wed–Sun 1–4pm and 8–11:30pm. Bar daily 11am–midnight.

La Hoja 21 ★ SPANISH Located behind Plaza Mayor near Salamanca public market (itself worth a look), this fresh-market restaurant serves a lot of fresh vegetables. (Contrary to popular belief, Spain does have vegetables beyond artichokes, canned asparagus, and green beans.) In fact, it's hard to tell what will be on the menu from one night to the next, except that you won't get fish on Monday. Even in the winter the chef finds a way to make sure you get your vitamins, serving mushroom risotto with grilled root vegetables. He braises the cheeks of the local heritage strain of Morucha beef and serves them with a warming creamed potato sauce. It's a hard spot to beat for creative cooking.

Calle San Pablo 21. www.lahoja21.com. ☎ **92-326-40-28.** Reservations required. Main courses 12€–19€; fixed-price menu 33€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 2–4:30pm and 9–11:30pm; Sun 2–4:30pm.

MOMO ★ SPANISH Taking its name from one of the surreal fantasies of German author Michel Ende, MOMO styles itself as "Berlin club industrial," and both the decor and the food strive to be edgy and of the moment. This desire to be cutting edge, fortunately, extends more to the design of the plates than to the food on them. Familiar Spanish flavors end up getting new suits—like smoked salmon in a soft taco, or a scramble of blood sausage and green apple. For a good starter, try the salad of pickled quail and foie gras. Smoked tongue smothered in roasted red peppers makes a good main course. Unsurprisingly, the kitchen consistently wins regional contests for creative tapas. For an inexpensive introduction to the chef's style, enjoy those tapas at the bar (3€–5€ each).

Calle San Pablo 13–15. www.momosalamanca.net. ☎ **923-28-07-98.** Main dishes 4€–22€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 2–4:30pm and 9pm–midnight.

Río de la Plata CASTILIAN A local dining favorite since 1958, this tiny basement restaurant 2 blocks south of the Plaza Mayor prepares classic Castilian fare, including a simple *cocido,* roast baby goat, grilled fish, and pungently flavored sausages.

Plaza del Peso 1. ☎ **92-321-90-05.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 19€–24€; *menú del día* 24€. MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–3:30pm and 9pm–12:30am. Closed 2 weeks in July.

Shopping

The town's two main shopping neighborhoods extend around **Calle Meléndez** and the historic borders of **Plaza Mayor.** Both areas are good bets for fashion and housewares. A ***rastro,*** or flea market, is held every Sunday along Avenida de Aldehuela. It's best to go before noon. Buses go here from Plaza de España, in the center of town. You'll also find terrific souvenirs (including some so classy you won't regret them) at the official university store, **Mercatus** ★, Cardenal Plá y

Deniel s/n (✆ **92-329-46-92**). If you fell in love with the student singing groups, or *tunas,* on Plaza Mayor, you can purchase their CDs. Reproductions of the Cielo of Salamanca appear on T-shirts, tote bags, puzzles, coasters, and silk scarves. Or buy your budding scholar a bright green stuffed frog—the good-luck talisman of Salamanca students.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Don't expect a large variety of nightlife options; this small-scale university town has an emphasis on undergraduate shenanigans. Your best bet is a stroll around the Plaza Mayor, where you'll pass cafes and bars ideal for lingering or loitering, depending on your point of view. Usually a group of singing ***tunas*** dressed in academic regalia perform for tips. You might also wander onto such neighboring medieval streets as Calle de Bordadores, Calle San Vicente, Calle Rúa Mayor, and Calle Varillas, any of which offers tucked-away spots for a quick caffeine or alcohol fix. Salamanca's main disco is **Camelot,** Calle Bordadores 3 (www.camelotsalamanca.com; ✆ **92-321-21-82**). There's a certain irony in its location in a 16th-century stone monastery. It's doubtful that the brothers rocked.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

AC Palacio de San Esteban ★ This top-flight hotel transformed the 17th-century former convent of San Esteban into an AC Selection, the Marriott/AC chain's highest grade. Located a boulder's throw from the Catedral Nueva, it's convenient for exploring the whole city. A certain monastic air prevails, giving the hotel a graceful simplicity and freeing the rooms of the heavy brocade and decorative gewgaws so often associated with "luxury" in Spanish hostelries. The hotel has been totally rejuvenated, but the traditional style and luxury of its architectural past have been honored. Guest rooms are midsize and attractively yet conservatively furnished; handsome bathrooms come with both tub and shower. The location is close to many sightseeing attractions, including the cathedrals.

Arroyo de Santo Domingo 3, 37001 Salamanca. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **92-326-22-96.** Fax 92-326-88-72. 51 units. 90€–175€ double; 114€–210€ double superior; 180€–340€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 11€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

Don Gregorio ★ This upscale boutique hotel, filled with works of art and antique furniture, is named for the early 19th-century university don who lived here. Bedrooms are spacious and feature modern conveniences. Many of the rooms have antiques that date back to the mansion's days as a private home. Guest rooms are elegant and deluxe, the service is top-notch, and the comfort is on a grand scale—from the rain showers in the bathrooms to the in-room massages.

Calle San Pablo 80–82, 37008 Salamanca. www.hoteldongregorio.com. ✆ **92-321-70-15.** 17 units. 270€–450€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Rector ★★ 🎁 This boutique hotel appeals to visitors who prefer the intimacy of a small inn to the palatial expanse of some of Salamanca's larger hotels. Just across the Puente Romano (Roman Bridge) from the Old Town, the setting is quiet but not too far for walking into town. It was a private mansion until the owners converted it into a hotel in 1990. Guest rooms are elegantly appointed with luxury mattresses and beautifully kept bathrooms. Don't expect all the luxuries found in a full-service hotel, but the staff here is extremely professional and polite. Because this place is such a gem, you have to reserve well in advance.

Rector Esperabé 10, 37008 Salamanca. www.hotelrector.com. ✆ **92-321-84-82.** Fax 92-321-40-08. 13 units. 151€–190€ double; 200€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Palacio de Castellanos ★ This deluxe hotel was built on the site of the original 15th-century Palacio de Castellanos; it lies in old Salamanca, near the Plaza Mayor, and has nice views in most directions. The good-size rooms are comfortable, contemporary, and state of the art, with sleek modern furnishings and puffy beds.

San Pablo 58–64, 37008 Salamanca. www.nh-hoteles.es. ✆ **92-326-18-18.** Fax 92-326-18-19. 62 units. 69€–140€ double; 150€–170€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

Parador de Salamanca Blocky and thoroughly modern, this *parador* differs from most in Castilla y León by emphasizing creature comforts over historical significance. It does stand 1.6km (1 mile) south of the old city center across the Tormes River, which makes it a bit of a hike to see the sites in the typical searing heat of summer. The use of Spanish carpets, oil paintings, and beautiful prints make the rooms both intimate and welcoming. Even the original severe architecture has been softened, particularly by the addition of many private balconies. The cafe also has a panoramic view of the city.

Calle Teso de la Feria 2, 37008 Salamanca. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-319-20-82.** Fax 92-319-20-87. 110 units. 130€–172€ double; from 208€ suite. AE, DC, V. Garage parking 12€; outside parking free. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MODERATE

Abba Fonseca Hotel ★ 🏷 A 5-minute walk from the cathedrals, this modern hotel inside a Renaissance-era golden sandstone building offers the comforts of great beds and thick towels, room to spread out, and all the network and power plugs to work on the road. Rooms are decorated in a soothing, unfussy contemporary style with excellent task and bedside lighting. The immediate neighborhood consists mostly of graduate colleges of the university, so on-street parking is shockingly easy and free.

Plaza San Blas 2, 37007 Salamanca. www.abbahotels.com. ✆ **92-301-10-10.** Fax 92-301-10-11. 86 units. 75€–130€ double; 110€–170€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; fitness center; sauna; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free in public areas, 6.20€ per 24 hr. in room).

Hotel San Polo Located in the historic center, this hotel was built on the ruins of an 11th-century church in the mid-1990s. Some of the Romanesque architectural elements have been incorporated into the contemporary building, which makes it more atmospheric. The midsize to spacious guest rooms are comfortably and tastefully furnished; many open onto views of the cathedral. The hotel is at the intersection of Paseo del Rector Esperabé and Avenida Reyes de España.

Calle Arroyo de Santo Domingo 2–4, 37008 Salamanca. www.hotelsanpolo.com. ✆ **92-321-11-77.** Fax 92-321-11-54. 37 units. 50€–121€ double; 80€–185€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Petit Palace Las Torres Dignified and well maintained, but with a staff that's completely lost in any language except Spanish, this hotel occupies a desirable spot near the northwest corner of the Plaza Mayor. The hotel, located in a building from 1728, was redecorated and equipped with all modern facilities. The comfortable guest rooms, although not overly large, contain excellent beds. Many of the rooms have plaza views, and bathrooms have tub/shower combos. Additional seating from the unpretentious restaurant spills outside beneath the plaza's arcades, allowing indoor/outdoor dining and lots of opportunities for people-watching.

Plaza Mayor 26 (entrance to the palace is from Calle Concejo 4), 37002 Salamanca. www.hthoteles.com. ✆ **92-321-21-00.** Fax 92-321-21-01. 53 units. 55€–120€ double; 100€–170€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Plaza Mayor 🏷 If you're in town mainly to sightsee and dine out, and if you don't want to spend much on a room, make this historic but relatively minimalist *hostal* your number-one choice. A modest establishment, it offers good value for clean, comfortable, small, and somewhat spartan-looking units. Each has a well-maintained private bathroom with a shower, many of which have been upgraded. The location is one of the finest in the city, right at the Plaza Mayor, opposite the church of St. Martin. There are not many rooms, so try to reserve as far in advance as feasible.

Plaza del Corrillo 20, 37002 Salamanca. www.hostalplazamayor.es. ✆ **92-326-20-20.** Fax 92-321-75-48. 19 units. 50€–65€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Don Juan ★ 🎁 For the serious budget traveler, this little family hotel, right off the Plaza Mayor, has a light and airy modernized interior in a landmark building. The owners are warm and welcoming. Guest rooms are small but well maintained and comfortable, with tasteful decor. Equally well-maintained bathrooms have tub/shower combos. If one is available, opt for a room with a balcony looking over the Old Town to the cathedral.

Calle Quintana 6, 37001 Salamanca. www.hoteldonjuan-salamanca.es/IN/HostalHTM.php. ✆ **92-326-14-73.** Fax 92-326-24-75. 16 units. 62€–80€ double. MC, V. Parking 10€ nearby. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

CIUDAD RODRIGO ★

87km (54 miles) SW of Salamanca, 285km (177 miles) W of Madrid

A walled town dating from the Roman Empire, **Ciudad Rodrigo** is known for its 16th- and 17th-century town houses, built by the conquistadors. It was founded in the 12th century, by Count Rodrigo González, and today is a national monument. Located near the Portuguese frontier and barely north of Extremadura, it stands high on a hilltop and is known for the familiar silhouette of the square tower of its Alcázar. This walled part of the city is referred to as the Casco Viejo.

The ramparts were built in the 12th century along Roman foundations. Several stairways lead up to a 1.6km (1-mile) sentry path. You can wander these ramparts at leisure and then walk through the streets, along which you'll find many churches and mansions. No single monument is that captivating, but as a whole, they make a striking impression.

Plaza Mayor is a showpiece of 17th-century architecture, with two Renaissance palaces. This is the city's main square. The **Cathedral of Santa María** (www.catedralciudadrodrigo.com; ✆ **92-348-14-24**) is the town's main attraction. It combines Romanesque and Gothic styles with a neoclassical tower. It was mostly built between 1170 and 1230, although subsequent centuries have seen more additions. Reach it by going east of Plaza Mayor through Plaza de San Salvador. The **Renaissance altar** on the north aisle is an acclaimed work of ecclesiastical art; look also for the **Virgin portal** at the west door, which dates from the 1200s. For 3€ you'll be admitted to the **cloisters,** which are done in a variety of architectural styles; among them is a Plateresque door. Hours are daily 11:45am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm.

Your transportation in Ciudad Rodrigo will be your trusty feet—walking is the only way to explore the city. Pick up a map at the tourist office (see below).

Essentials

GETTING THERE The only real way to get here is from Salamanca. Because **train** service is infrequent and the railway station is a long way from the walls of the Old City, it's easier to take the bus from Salamanca; you'll get off at the Ciudad Rodrigo station at Calle Campo de Toledo (✆ **92-346-02-17**). There are daily **buses** from Salamanca (trip time: 1 hr.). The cost is 11€ one-way.

The N-620 is the main road from both Salamanca and Portugal. Driving time from Salamanca is about 1¼ hours.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza Amayuelas 5 (www.ciudadrodrigo.net; ✆ **92-346-05-61**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS Ciudad Rodrigo's Carnaval festivities in February feature a running of the bulls, traditional dances, and costumes.

Where to Eat

Mayton ★ 🏷 CASTILIAN Adjacent to Plaza Mayor, in a 12th-century building, is Mayton, one of the city's best restaurants. Its antique walls reverberate with atmosphere and legend. The dining room walls have been restored to reveal the original 12th-century rock walls. The moderately priced menu is split between roasted fish brought a long way from the coast, and roasted meats raised in the local vicinity. Try *sopa castellana* (a chicken broth, garlic, and bread soup) for an appetizer, or roast pork or a massive veal chop nearly as tender as you'd find in Ávila as a main course. Mayton has a superb wine list of Castilian, Extremaduran, and Portuguese wines.

La Colada 9. www.ciudadrodrigo.net/mayton. ✆ **92-346-07-20.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–20€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 8pm–midnight.

Restaurante Estoril 🏷 BASQUE This *asador* (grill restaurant) places special emphasis on its roasted goat and roasted kid dishes. Now in the second generation of family ownership, Estoril seems to have a personal connection to the Basque coast, since the seafood reflects that particular cookery and even the crab is of the variety only found on the Bay of Biscay. Even the roasted hake and cod are presented in the Basque style. The seafood soup is particularly good. Everything is accompanied by a variety of regional wines, including Basque txakoli and some of the powerful reds of Extremadura.

Calle General Pando ll. www.restaurante-estoril.com. ✆ **92-346-05-50.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–26€; fixed-price menus 14€–40€. DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 11am–midnight.

Where to Stay

Hotel Conde Rodrigo I Its central location next to the cathedral is a big plus for this modest hotel; try for a room opening onto the square. The freshly renovated rooms are on the small side and simply decorated but comfortable. Bathrooms have tub/shower combos. The 17th-century building itself has a certain neoclassical dignity with its thick walls of chiseled stone. Off-street public parking is available.

Plaza de San Salvador 9, 37500 Ciudad Rodrigo. www.conderodrigo.com. ✆ **92-346-14-04.** Fax 92-346-14-08. 34 units. 60€–80€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Parador de Ciudad Rodrigo ★★ ☺ This romantic *parador* occupies a 14th-century castle from the era when the kings of Castilla and Portugal were waging a constant blood feud. As such, it has an impressive tower, the Torre del Homenaje, that has become the symbol of the city. Once the seat of the feudal court, the *parador* has several gates and *miradores*—platforms offering panoramic views where guests often gather to watch the striking sunsets. The Gothic entrance bears the royal coat of arms and a plaque in Gothic letters. The tastefully furnished rooms offer considerable style and comfort. Ask for a room overlooking the garden that runs down to the Agueda River.

Plaza del Castillo 1, 37500 Ciudad Rodrigo. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-346-01-50.** Fax 92-346-04-04. 35 units. 120€–155€ double; 186€–226€ double superior. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; children's center; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

The Parador de Ciudad Rodrigo.

7

EXTREMADURA

Spain's mountainous westernmost region was the wild frontier for more than a millennium. Rome built military outposts here to claim westernmost Europe, and the kings of Castilla fortified the hills against the Moors, then against the Portuguese. Extremadura extends from the Gredos and Gata mountain ranges south to Andalucía, and from Castilla west to the Portuguese frontier. Not to be confused with the Portuguese province of Extremadura, Spanish Extremadura includes the provinces of Badajoz and Cáceres, and has a varied landscape of plains and mountains, meadows with Holm and cork oaks, and fields of boulders and limestone outcrops.

The world knows Extremadura best as the land of the conquistadors. Famous sons include Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, conquerors of the Aztecs and Incas, respectively, as well as explorers Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Francisco de Orellana, and Hernando de Soto. Driven by economic necessity to find a living far from their sun-parched homeland, they imposed iron wills on peoples half a world away. The riches they sent back to Extremadura financed mansions and public structures that stand today as monuments to Spain's American adventures. Those are hardly Extremadura's only monuments to the past, for you'll also find Roman ruins in Mérida and medieval palaces in Cáceres.

Extremadura is also a popular destination for outdoor vacations. Spaniards come here to hunt, to enjoy the fishing and watersports popular in the many reservoirs, and to ride horseback along ancient trails. Because summer is intensely hot here, spring and fall are the best times to visit.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN EXTREMADURA

- **Seeing breeding storks in the spring and summer:** The white stork, which represents good luck in European folklore, is nearly extinct in much of its former European habitat. But thousands of pairs nest on any high point—from a belltower to a telephone pole—in Extremadura.
- **Watching a performance of Euripides at the Roman Theater:** When the daylight falls, the chorus takes its place and figures from Europe's oldest body of literature once again walk the earth. The millennia roll away as the tales of the ancients unfurl on a 2,000-year-old stage in Mérida.
- **Walking in the footsteps of a conquistador:** In his day, Francisco Pizarro was one of the world's most powerful men. See where he slept by the fireplace in his grandfather's house in Trujillo and visit the church where he learned his conqueror's version of Christendom.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Museo Nacional de Arte Romano in Mérida.**

- **Viewing master works by Zurbarán in Guadalupe:** The great painter Francisco de Zurbarán was born in Fuente de Cantos near Guadalupe. He came home to execute a masterful series of eight canvases on the life of San Jéronimo, now displayed in the museum of the Monasterio de Guadalupe.
- **Passing through the Arco de la Estrella:** In a city where every noble tried to outdo the other with his in-city fortified home, the baroque architect Manuel Churriguera aced them all with his ceremonial city gate in the walls of Cáceres.

GUADALUPE

225km (140 miles) SW of Madrid

Guadalupe lies in the province of Cáceres, 450m (1,500 ft.) above sea level. The village has a certain beauty and a lot of local color. Thanks to its famous shrine to the Virgin (known as Our Lady of Guadalupe), it's packed with pilgrims and is a major outlet of the religious souvenir industry. And it's easy to get around—everything of interest lies within a 3-minute walk of the bus drop-off point at Avenida Don Blas Pérez, also known as Carretera de Cáceres.

Around the corner and a few paces downhill is the Plaza Mayor, which contains the Town Hall (where many visitors stop in to ask questions, as there is no tourist office).

The village is best visited in spring, when the balconies of its whitewashed houses burst into bloom with flowers. Wander the twisting, narrow streets, some no more than alleyways. In fact, the buildings are so close together that in summer, you can walk in the shade of the steeply pitched sienna-colored tile roofs.

Getting There

Two **buses** operate every day to and from Madrid's Estación Sur (trip time: 3½ hr.). The road is poor, but the route through the surrounding regions is full of savage beauty. In Guadalupe the buses park just uphill from the Town Hall. For schedules, call **Empresa La Sepulvedana,** in Madrid (www.avanzabus.com; ✆ **91-559-89-55**).

One narrow highway goes through Guadalupe. Most maps don't give it a number; look on a map in the direction of the town of Navalmoral de la Mata. From Madrid, follow the A-5 west to exit 171 at Navalmoral de la Mata. Follow signs on EX-118 south to Guadalupe. Driving time from Madrid is about 3 hours outside of rush hour.

Exploring Guadalupe

Except for a handful of basic souvenir shops around the Plaza Mayor, don't expect to find a lot of particularly interesting shopping in Guadalupe. The exception is the small but personalized **Cacharro Tienda,** Plaza Mayor 12 (✆ **92-715-42-67**), with an unusual collection of brass, copper, and iron. If you are not planning to visit Cáceres, you can purchase Extremadura's famous smoked Spanish paprika at a number of stalls on the Plaza Mayor. You'll pay a pittance compared to what it will cost you at home, and you will have the very best quality.

Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe ★★ RELIGIOUS SITE

In 1325, a farmer searching for a stray cow reportedly spotted a statue of the Virgin buried in the soil. In time, this statue became venerated throughout

The Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe.

the world, honored in Spain by Queen Isabel, Columbus, and Cervantes. Known as the Dark Virgin of Guadalupe, it is said to have been carved by St. Luke. A shrine was built to commemorate the statue, and tributes poured in from all over the world, making the Guadalupe monastery one of the wealthiest in Christendom. The statue is found in the 18th-century chapel, **Camarín** ★, where a treasure-trove of riches surrounds the Virgin, including jasper, marble, and precious woods, plus nine paintings by Luca Giordano.

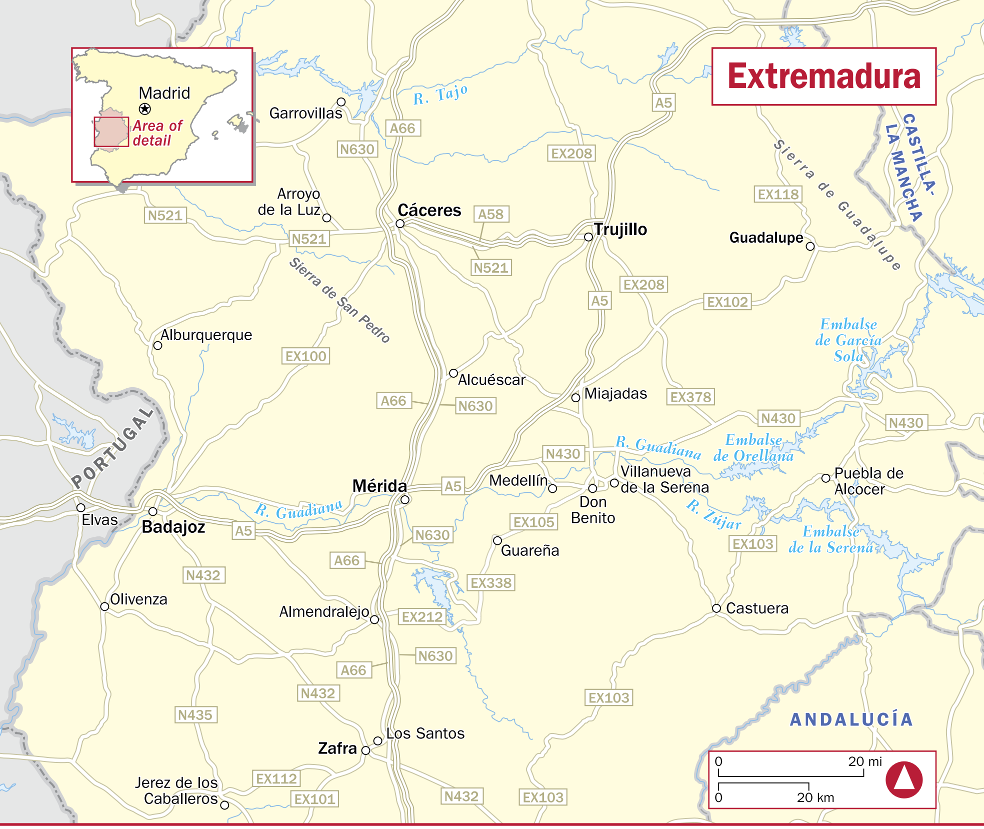
The church itself is noted for the wrought-iron railings in its naves and a magnificently decorated **sacristy** ★★ with eight richly imaginative 17th-century masterpieces by Francisco de Zurbarán. The museum is devoted to ecclesiastical vestments and choir books produced by 16th-century miniaturists. The 16th-century cloister is Flamboyant Gothic in style, but the *pièces de résistance* are the stunning **Mudéjar cloister,** with its brick-and-tile Gothic Mudéjar shrine dating from 1405, and a **Moorish fountain** from the 14th century.

Plaza de Juan Carlos 1. www.monasterioguadalupe.com. ✆ **92-736-70-00.** Admission to museum and sacristy 4€ adults, 1.50€ children 7–14, free for children 6 and under. Daily 9:30am–1pm and 3:30–6:30pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Because Guadalupe is remote, even by Extremaduran standards, restaurants are also small inns, and larger hotels have major restaurants.

Hospedería del Real Monasterio ★ Here's your chance to stay in an antique monastery. Once a way station for pilgrims visiting the shrine, the *hospedería* used to provide lodging in return for a small donation. Times have changed, but the prices remain moderate. Be sure to reserve ahead, as pilgrim bus tours sometimes fill the hotel. Because it was converted from a monastery, guest rooms come in various shapes and sizes, each tastefully furnished and fitted with a firm bed and well-maintained bathroom. The dining room has all the


Extremadura
Madrid
Area of detail
PORTUGAL
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
ANDALUCÍA
Garrovillas
R. Tajo
A66
N630
A5
EX208
Arroyo de la Luz
Cáceres
A58
Trujillo
Guadalupe
EX118
Sierra de Guadalupe
N521
N521
N521
Sierra de San Pedro
EX208
A5
EX102
Embalse de García Sola
Alburquerque
EX100
Alcuéscar
Miajadas
EX378
A66
N630
N430
N430
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R. Guadiana
Embalse de Orellana
Villanueva de la Serena
Medellín
Don Benito
Puebla de Alcocer
Mérida
A5
Elvas
Badajoz
R. Guadiana
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EX105
Guareña
R. Zújar
EX103
Embalse de la Serena
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flourishes of provincial Spanish decor, down to the pink tablecloths and more glasses per seat than any diner could ever use. But the food is good, local, and reasonably priced (main dishes 9€–14€). Consider potato soup as a starter, then enjoy a pork sirloin (from the prized black-footed Iberian pig, no less!) stuffed with apricots, raisins, and pâté de foie gras.

Plaza Juan Carlos 1, 10140 Guadalupe. www.hotelhospederiamonasterioguadalupe.com. ✆ **92-736-70-00.** Fax 92-736-71-77. 47 units. 70€ double; 94€ triple. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan 8–Feb 8. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer.

Hostal-Restaurante Cerezo EXTREMADURAN If you don't mind eating most of your meals in one place, this establishment is a good deal, since two meals are included in the room rate. The restaurant serves highly traditional Extremaduran cooking. It's a good idea to skip the fish (too far from the ocean) and concentrate on local specialties like the roasted lamb or kid with rosemary, the Extremaduran version of gazpacho, and almost anything involving ripe sweet peppers (pimientos). Start with the Guadalupe version of spicy sausage with vegetables, *morcilla de la puebla.* The desserts, made on premises, include some rather elaborate ice-cream cakes. The 18 rooms upstairs are simple, comfortable, well maintained, and priced right (70€–90€ double with two meals).

Gregorio López 20. www.hostalcerezo.com. ✆ **97-236-73-79.** Fax 92-736-75-31. Main courses 8.50€–16€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8–11pm.

LAND OF THE conquistadors

It's estimated that some 15,000 Extremeños (from a total pop. of 400,000) went to seek their fortunes in the New World. The most fabled of these adventurers were **Hernán Cortés** (from Medellín), who went to Mexico; **Francisco Pizarro** (from Trujillo), who went to Peru; **Vasco Núñez de Balboa** (from Jerez de los Caballeros), who landed in Panama, where he was the first European to sight the Pacific Ocean; **Hernando de Soto** (from Barcarrota), who discovered the Mississippi River and explored Florida and beyond; and **Francisco de Orellana** (also from Trujillo), who ventured through Ecuador and the Amazon.

Thanks to these conquistadors, the names of Extremaduran villages are sprinkled through the Americas, as exemplified by the Guadalupe Mountains (Texas), Albuquerque (New Mexico), Trujillo (Peru), Mérida (Mexico), and Medellín (Colombia).

Because Extremeños faced such difficulty making a living in the harsh land of their birth, they often turned elsewhere to seek their fortune. One reason for the area's extreme poverty was that huge tracts of land, used for ranching, were owned by absentee landlords (as many still are today), in a holdover from the feudal Middle Ages. These ranches are called *latifundios*, and they're often home to tenant farmers and their families, who pay the owners for the privilege of grazing a few goats or growing scanty crops in the dry climate. Worse, a system of *mayorazgo* (still in effect) decreed that all family property must be passed to the eldest son, leaving any younger sons, called *secundinos*, penniless. Not surprisingly, many of *secundinos* set sail for the New World.

Plenty of conquistadors died or stayed in the New World, but others made their fortunes and returned to the land of their birth to build magnificent homes, villas, and ranches, many of which stand today. Bernal Díaz, who fought in 119 battles with the Cortés expedition to Mexico, described the situation very bluntly. "We came here to serve God and the king," he wrote, "and to get rich."

Parador de Guadalupe ★★ Located in a scenic spot in the center of the village, the area's most luxurious rooms are in a 15th-century building with a beautiful garden. Queen Isabella once stayed here, and the place was often the site of meetings between royal representatives and explorers, who signed their contracts here before setting out for the New World. The house is named after Francisco de Zurbarán, the great 17th-century painter who was born in the nearby town of Fuente de Cantos. There is a copy of a Zurbarán painting in one of the salons, along with reproduction maps and engravings—many of them valuable works of art. Most of the comfortable rooms are quite spacious. The dining room here is a good bet if you really want to settle in to feast on heavy Extremaduran dishes—roasts, hearty casseroles—washed down with high-alcohol Extremaduran red wines (main dishes 16€–28€).

Marqués de la Romana 12, 10140 Guadalupe. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-736-70-75.** Fax 92-736-70-76. 41 units. 120€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

TRUJILLO ★

245km (152 miles) SW of Madrid, 45km (28 miles) E of Cáceres

The walled town of Trujillo as it appears today dates from a Moorish border fort built in the 13th century. But no one remembers the Moors in Trujillo, for the tiny town is known for having conquered or explored half the New World. Among its famous natives are Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru (whose family palace on the Plaza Mayor was built with gold from the New World), and Francisco de Orellana, the founder of Guayaquil, Ecuador, and the first European to explore the Amazon. Other historical Trujillano notables include Francisco de las Casas, who accompanied Hernán Cortés in his conquest of Mexico and founded the city of Trujillo in Honduras; Diego García de Paredes, who founded Trujillo in Venezuela; Nuño de Chaves, founder of Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia; and several hundred others whose names are found throughout the Americas. There is a saying that 20 American countries were born here.

Celts, Romans, Moors, and Christians have inhabited Trujillo over the centuries. The original town, lying above today's modern one, was built on a granite ledge on the hillside. It is centered on a lovely Plaza Mayor, encircled by a Moorish castle, a variety of 16th- and 17th-century palaces, as well as several manor houses, towers, churches, and arcades. A bronze equestrian statue of Pizarro by American artists Mary Harriman and Charles Runse rules over the entire scene. Steep, narrow streets and shadowy little corners evoke the bygone times when explorers set out from here on their history-making adventures.

Essentials

GETTING THERE There are 12 **buses** per day to and from Madrid (trip time: 3½–4½ hr.). There are also six buses running daily from Cáceres (45 min.), and five from Badajoz (2 hr.). A one-way ticket from Madrid costs 20€ to 32€; from Cáceres, 5€; and from Badajoz, 12€ to 21€. Trujillo's bus station, Calle Marqués Albayda (www.avanzabus.com; ✆ **92-732-12-02**), is on the south side of town, on a side street that intersects with Calle de la Encarnación.

Trujillo lies at a network of large and small roads connecting it to Cáceres via the N-521 and to Lisbon and Madrid via the N-V superhighway. Driving time from Madrid is around 3 hours.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** on Plaza Mayor (www.ayto-trujillo.com; ✆ **92-732-26-77**), is open daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm.

Exploring Trujillo

In the heart of Trujillo, **Plaza Mayor ★** is one of the outstanding architectural sights of Extremadura. It's dominated by a statue honoring Francisco Pizarro, whose armies destroyed Peru's Inca civilization. The statue is an exact double of one standing in Lima. Many of the buildings on this square were financed with wealth brought back from the New World.

Each year on the Puente de Mayo (the long weekend closest to May 1), Trujillo hosts the **Feria Nacional de Queso,** or National Cheese Festival. Small artisanal producers fill the Plaza Mayor offering tastes of their products and selling them at great discounts.

Pizarro on horseback in Trujillo's Plaza Mayor.

The square's most prominent structure is the **Ayuntamiento Viejo (Old Town Hall),** with three tiers of arches, each tier squatter than the one below. **Iglesia de San Martín** stands behind the statue dedicated to Pizarro. This granite church, originally from the 15th century, was reconstructed in the 16th century in Renaissance style. Inside are an impressive nave, several tombs, and a rare 18th-century organ still in working condition.

While you're on the square, observe the unusual facade of **Casa de las Cadenas,** a 12th-century house draped with a heavy chain, a symbol meant to show that Felipe II had granted the Orellana family immunity from heavy taxes.

You can then visit the **Palacio de los Duques de San Carlos,** a 16th-century ducal residence now used as a convent. Ring the bell to gain entry Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 1pm and 4:30 to 6:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 12:30pm. An entrance fee of 1.50€ is required, and a resident will show you around; appropriate dress (no shorts or bare shoulders) is required. Note the Renaissance figures sculpted on the facade. The two-level courtyard inside is even more impressive.

Palacio de la Conquista, also on the square, is one of the most grandiose mansions in Trujillo. Originally constructed by Hernán Pizarro, the present structure was built by his son-in-law to commemorate the exploits of this explorer, who accompanied his half brother, Francisco, to Peru.

The stores that ring the Plaza Mayor have the town's best **shopping;** they stock stonework, leather, brass, copper, and ironwork.

Casa-Museo de Pizarro ★ HISTORIC HOME If you walk uphill to the Old Quarter, you can get personal with the conquistador Francisco Pizarro at his grandfather's house. It's a chance to see the kind of background that drove a man so possessed with conquest that he brought most of a continent under the Spanish yoke. The conqueror-to-be spent much of his childhood here, and the lower level shows how the family lived. Exhibits upstairs detail his career and explain a little about the Inca culture that he effectively extinguished.

Calle Martibés s/n. No phone. Admission 1.40€ adults, children free. Daily 10am–2pm and 4:30–7:30pm.

Castillo ☺ CASTLE Constructed by the Moors on the site of a Roman fortress, this castle stands at the summit of the granite hill (Cabeza del Zorro, or "head of the fox") on which Trujillo was founded. You can climb its battlements and walk along the ramparts, enjoying a panoramic view of Extremadura's austere countryside. Later, you can go below and see the dungeons. It is said that the

Virgin Mary appeared here in 1232, giving the Christians renewed courage to free the city from domination by the Moors. ***Tip:*** Many visitors find it most dramatic at sunset.

Crowning the hilltop. No phone. Admission 1.50€. June–Sept daily 10am–2pm and 5–8:30pm; Oct–May 10am–2pm and 4–8pm.

Iglesia de Santa María la Mayor ★ CHURCH This Gothic church, with its outstanding Renaissance choir, is the largest in Trujillo, having been built over the ruins of a Moorish mosque. Fernando and Isabel once attended Mass here. The proudest treasure is a *retablo* (altar) with two dozen panels painted by Fernando Gallego. Also here is the tomb of Diego García de Paredes, the "Samson of Extremadura," who is said to have single-handedly defended a bridge against an attacking French army with only a gigantic sword. To reach the church, go through the gate of Plaza Mayor at Puerta de San Andrés and take Calle de las Palomas through the Old Town. Views from the bell tower are even more magical than from the ramparts of the Castillo.

Calle de Ballesteros. ✆ **92-732-02-11.** Admission 1.40€. Apr–Sept daily 10am–2pm and 5–9pm; Oct–Mar daily 10am–2pm and 4–7pm.

Where to Eat

Mesón la Troya EXTREMADURAN Locals and visitors alike are drawn to this centrally located restaurant featuring regional cuisine and doing the province proud. Few people leave hungry after devouring the fixed-price menu, with its more-than-ample portions; food items change daily. Local dishes include *prueba de cerdo* (garlic-flavored pork casserole), *carne con tomate* (beef cooked in tomato sauce), and spit-roasted goat. Start with a fino sherry in the bar, which resembles the facade of a Spanish house. This cozy provincial theme continues into the dining rooms, where the white walls are decorated with ceramic plates, potted plants, and red tiles.

Plaza Mayor 10. ✆ **92-732-13-64.** Reservations not accepted. Tapas 3€–15€; set menu 16€. MC, V. Daily 1–4:30pm and 8:45–11:30pm.

Pizarro EXTREMADURAN Trujillanos flock to this centrally located *hostal* for regional Extremaduran cookery at lunch. Built in 1864, the inn is set on the town's main square and is named for its famous son. The same family has owned and operated the place since 1919. Regional wines accompany meals that invariably include *jamón ibérico*—ham from acorn-fed Iberian pigs, said to be nearly the equal of the hams from Andalucía. You might begin with asparagus with mayonnaise sauce, and then follow with *asado de cordero* (roast lamb flavored with herbs and garlic); roast goat is a local favorite. The kitchen's game specialty is *estofado de perdices* (partridge casserole).

Plaza Mayor 13. ✆ **92-732-02-55.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–18€; *menú del día* 15€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 1–4pm.

Where to Stay

Hotel Victoria ★ 🎁 This small, delightful hotel lies a 5-minute walk from the Plaza Mayor in an ornate 19th-century colonial mansion. The interior is light and airy, and the rooms surround what was once the house's courtyard. Each level is adorned with filigreed pillars and ornate wrought-iron balustrades and capitals. The guest rooms are spacious, with wooden ceilings, tiled marble floors, and comfortable beds, along with modern conveniences such as private, well-equipped bathrooms.

Plaza del Campillo 22, 10200 Trujillo. www.hotelvictoriatrujillo.es. ☎ **92-732-18-19.** Fax 92-732-30-84. 27 units. 85€ double; 135€ triple. AE, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (in some, free).

Izán Trujillo ★ 🎁 A former monastery, this hotel includes the 17th-century cloisters of the Convento de San Antonio. It's not unusual for the central courtyard of buildings in Extremadura to have a fountain, but this hotel has a pool—making it the best place in town to beat the heat. Guest rooms range from small to spacious, but the decor is classic Spanish provincial. One nice touch: The beautiful decorative linens are made by the nuns of a nearby convent.

Plaza del Campillo 1, Trujillo 10200. www.izanhoteles.es. ☎ **92-745-89-00.** Fax 92-732-30-46. 77 units. 85€–150€ double; 115€–190€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Las Cigüeñas Located east of the town center and convenient if you're driving, this place doesn't have the charm of the *parador* (see below), but it's a whole lot cheaper. A roadside hotel with a garden, it offers functional, clean, and comfortable guest rooms equipped with firm mattresses and well-maintained bathrooms. The hotel's name refers to the thousands of storks who come to this part of Extremadura between February and August to lay their eggs and raise their chicks.

Av. de Madrid s/n, 10200 Trujillo. www.hotelasciguenas.com. ☎ **92-732-12-50.** Fax 92-732-13-00. 44 units. 80€–98€ double; 95€–125€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Parador de Trujillo ★★ Housed in the 1533 Convent of Santa Clara, this centrally located *parador,* about a block south of Avenida de la Coronación, is a gem of Trujillo-style medieval and Renaissance architecture that's been faithfully restored since being converted into a *parador* in 1984. The beautifully decorated rooms, once nuns' cells, have canopied beds and spacious bathrooms. The *parador* has been renovated with a mixture of rustic and modern furniture, and modern additions to the building (for example, a courtyard in its new section) blend seamlessly with the original convent architecture. The gardens and fruit trees of the Renaissance cloister are inviting.

Calle de Santa Beatriz de Silva 1, 10200 Trujillo. www.parador.es. ☎ **92-732-13-50.** Fax 92-732-13-66. 50 units. 120€–150€ double; 160€–214€ double superior; 240€–260€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

CÁCERES ★

298km (185 miles) SW of Madrid, 256km (159 miles) N of Sevilla

A national landmark and the capital of Extremadura, Cáceres is encircled by old city walls and has several palaces and towers, many financed by gold sent from the Americas by the conquistadors.

One of six cities in Spain designated World Heritage sites by UNESCO, Cáceres was founded in the 1st century B.C. by the Romans as Norba Caesarina. Its present-day name is derived from *alcázares,* an Arab word meaning "fortified citadel." After the Romans, it was settled by all the cultures that have made the south of Spain the cultural melting pot of influences it is today. The contemporary city offers a unique blend of the traces these successive invaders left behind.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Cáceres has the best **rail** connections in the province, with five trains per day from Madrid (trip time: 4–5 hr.). A one-way ticket costs 27€ to 40€. There is also one train per day from Lisbon (6½ hr.); the fare ranges from 40€ to 136€.

The station in Cáceres is on Avenida Alemania (✆ **90-232-03-20**), near the main highway heading south (Carretera de Sevilla). A green-and-white bus shuttles passengers about once an hour from the railway and bus stations (across the street from one another; board the shuttle outside the bus station) to the busiest traffic junction in the new city, the Plaza de América. From there it's a 10-minute walk to the edge of the Old Town.

Bus connections to Cáceres are more frequent than railway connections. From the city bus station (✆ **92-723-25-50**) on busy Carretera de Sevilla, about .8km (½ mile) south of the city center, buses arrive and depart for Madrid (trip time: 5 hr.) and Sevilla (4½ hr.) every 2 to 3 hours. There's also bus transport to Guadalupe (one per day); Trujillo (six or seven a day); Mérida (four a day); Valladolid (two a day); and Córdoba (two a day). Many travelers opt to walk the short distance from the Cáceres bus station to the city center.

Driving time from Madrid is about 3½ hours. Most people approach Cáceres from eastern Spain via the A-V superhighway until they reach Trujillo. Here they exit onto the A-58, driving another 45km (28 miles) west to Cáceres.

Cáceres Viejo, the Old City.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza Mayor s/n (www.turismoextremadura.com; ✆ **92-701-08-34**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:45am to 2pm. Don't expect efficiency. Things around here are slow.

EVENTS You'll probably notice literally hundreds of breeding pairs of storks nesting on the rooftops and bell towers in town. Cáceres celebrates them with a weeklong festival in early May. The city is one of the most important stork breeding sites in Europe.

Exploring the Old Town of Cáceres

The modern city lies southwest of the *barrio antiguo,* **Cáceres Viejo ★★★**, which is enclosed by massive **ramparts.** The heart of the Old City lies between Plaza de Santa María and, a few blocks to the south, Plaza San Mateo. **Plaza de Santa María ★** is an irregularly shaped, rather elongated square. On each of its sides are the honey-brown facades of buildings once inhabited by the local nobility. On a casual stroll through the city's cobblestone streets, your attention will surely be drawn to the walls that enclose the old upper town. A mixture of Roman and Arab engineering, they are outstandingly preserved. About 30 towers remain from the city's medieval walls, all of them heavily restored. Originally much taller, the towers reflected the pride and independence of their builders; when Queen Isabel took control, however, she ordered them cut down to size. The largest surviving tower is at Plaza del General Mola. Beside it stands **El Arco de la Estrella (the Arch of the Star),** constructed by Manuel Churriguera in the 18th century. To its right you'll see the **Torre del Horno,** a mud-brick adobe structure left from the Moorish occupation.

On the far side of Plaza de Santa María rises the **Catedral de Santa María,** a Gothic structure to which many Renaissance embellishments were added when Cáceres became rich. Completed sometime in the 1500s, this is the cathedral of Cáceres and contains the remains of many conquistadors. It has three Gothic aisles of almost equal height and a carved *retablo* at the high altar dating from the 16th century. (Insert coins to light it up.)

La Casa de los Toledo-Montezuma was built by Juan Cano de Saavedra with money from the dowry of his wife, the daughter of Montezuma. The house is set into the northern corner of the medieval ramparts, about a block to the north of Plaza de Santa María. It is now a public-records office.

Plaza Mayor is remarkably free from most of the blemishes and scars that city planning and overregulation have made so common in other historically important sites. Passing through El Arco de la Estrella, you will catch the most advantageous angle at which to view Catedral de Santa María.

Some of the most appealing shops in Cáceres are on the streets radiating from the Plaza Mayor, with a particularly good selection of artifacts along either side of **Calle Pintores.**

Cáceres's Plaza Mayor.

The Flavor of the Land

The cuisine offered at the *parador* and at many other places in Cáceres affords a novel experience to even seasoned travelers. You might try the famous ***cuchifrito,*** suckling pig stewed in pepper, orange, and vinegar sauce; or ***caldereta de cordero,*** lamb with pepper and almonds. A more daring choice would be ***jabalí a la cacereña,*** wild boar marinated in red wine and herbs. You will also find that many dishes are spiced with smoked paprika of Cáceres, the ***pimentón de la Vera.*** The region was one of the first to receive chili peppers from the expeditions of Cortés in Mexico, and has incorporated them into local cookery since the 1540s. The most characteristic dessert in all of Extremadura is ***técula mécula,*** an ancient example of the region's marzipan confectionery, which, like most things in Cáceres, has been passed down from one generation to the next for centuries.

Cuesta de la Compañía leads to Plaza San Mateo and the 14th-century **Iglesia de San Mateo,** which has a Plateresque portal and a rather plain nave—except for the Plateresque tombs, which add a decorative touch.

Two adjoining *plazuelas* near here embody the flavor of old Cáceres. The first of them, **Plaza de las Veletas,** on the site of the old Alcázar, has **Casa de las Veletas (Weather Vane House; ✆ 92-701-08-77**), site of a provincial archaeological museum with priceless prehistoric and Roman pieces, along with a famous *aljibe* (Arabic well). Its baroque facade, ancient Moorish cistern, five naves with horseshoe arches, and patio and paneling from the 17th century have been preserved. The museum displays Celtic and Visigothic remains, Roman and Gothic artifacts, and a numismatic collection. Admission is free. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 2:30pm and 4 to 7pm, and on Sunday 10am to 2:30pm. At the second *plazuela,* **San Pablo,** sits **Casa de las Cigüeñas (House of the Storks),** the only palace whose tower remains intact despite the order by Queen Isabel at the turn of the 15th century to reduce the height of all such strategic locations for military reasons. The building holds changing art exhibitions; admission is free.

The **Church of Santiago** was begun in the 12th century and restored in the 16th century. It has a reredos carved in 1557 by Alonso de Berruguete and a 15th-century figure of Christ. The church is outside the ramparts, about a block to the north of Arco de Socorro. To reach it, exit the gate, enter Plaza Socorro, and then walk down Calle Godoy. The church is on your right.

Where to Eat

Atrio ★★★ SPANISH Toño Pérez used to draw gourmets from all over Europe even when Atrio was in a nondescript modern shopping mall. Now that his dining room anchors one of the most beautiful hotels in Extremadura—a modern architectural jewel within the shell of a 15th-century palace—reservations are hard to get but worth the effort. Pérez effectively put Extremadura on Spain's culinary map, and he did it the same way that the Basque culinary revolutionaries did: by emphasizing highly local but fantastic provender and treating it simply to bring out the flavors. The Recinto breed of cattle supplies all the beef, while the pork comes from all locally bred, forest-grazed Iberian pigs. The menu changes almost daily, depending on what's fresh and local. The wine list is so good that it was twice chosen as the world's best by *Wine Spectator* magazine. Sommelier and manager José Polo is Pérez's partner.

Av. de España 30. www.restauranteatrio.com. ✆ **92-724-29-28.** Reservations recommended. Fixed-price menus 90€–110€; extra supplement for truffles and goose barnacles. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm; Mon–Sat 9pm–midnight. Closed last 2 weeks in July.

El Figón de Eustaquío ★ EXTREMADURAN For travelers without the fat wallets required for Atrio, El Figón is a terrific spot to taste the regional cuisine prepared with extraordinary care. The four Blanco brothers, who run the place, do it all. This includes preparing the amazingly varied dishes—honey soup, *solomillo* (filet of beef), and trout Extremaduran style (covered in ham), as well as typical Spanish specialties. The air-conditioned interior has a rustic decor. El Figón is west of the western ramparts of the Old City, near the intersection of Avenida Virgen de Guadalupe and Plaza San Juan.

Plaza San Juan 14. www.elfigondeeustaquio.com. ✆ **92-724-43-62.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–28€; fixed-price menus 19€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed July 1–15.

Torre de Sande SPANISH Set in a 15th-century palace in Plaza de San Mateo, at the city's highest point, this restaurant features a trio of dining rooms and a beautiful terraced garden (in use as weather permits). The view of the city from the garden is panoramic, and especially wonderful at night. The kitchen combines regional flavors and the best of modern recipes, with palate-pleasing and marvelously succulent results. Try such local dishes as *boletus con foie* (mushrooms with duck liver), *solomillo de retinto* (a prized local beefsteak), or *perdiz a la cantara con salsa* (partridge stuffed with liver and truffles in a port-wine sauce). Desserts include *tapita de tres chocolates* (layer cake of three types of chocolate) and sheep's milk pudding.

Calle de los Condes 3. ✆ **92-721-11-47.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–4pm and 7pm–midnight. Closed 2 weeks in Jan and 2 weeks in June.

Where to Stay

Alameda Palacete ★ 🏷 This noble manse, built at the turn of the 20th century, has been completely restored and turned into a romantic and inviting hotel. The original design has been preserved wherever possible, including the Venetian stucco of the central stairs (a Venetian architect was imported). For such luxury, the place is amazingly affordable. Some of the rooms are very spacious, as are the bathrooms. Modern facilities have been installed but each room is individually designed, with comfort a major consideration. The location is fairly convenient, about a 5-minute walk to Plaza Mayor.

Calle General Margallo 45, 10003 Cáceres. www.alamedapalacete.com. ✆/fax **92-721-16-74.** 9 units. 60€–75€ double; 85€–100€ suite. MC, V. Nearby parking 8€. *In room:* A/C, TV, no phone, Wi-Fi (free).

Casa Don Fernando ★★ ☺ Once a grand private home on the Plaza Mayor across from the Arco de la Estrella and the town hall, this contemporary boutique hotel has spacious rooms, chic decor, and a no-smoking policy that it actually enforces. The styling is very minimal but extremely functional, and linens are top grade. Moreover, the location is unbeatable. If you're staying more than a night, splurge for the Superior rooms on the front of the building because they are even more spacious and have sweeping views of Plaza Mayor and the walls of the Old City.

Plaza Mayor 30, 10003 Cáceres. www.casadonfernando.com. ✆ **92-762-71-76.** Fax 92-721-42-79. 36 units. 70€–108€ double; 85€–132€ superior; 89€–145€ family room. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 8€. **Amenities:** Cafe; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Cáceres ★★ Set inside a 15th-century palace, this state-run *parador* was one of the oldest in the system. Since the 2011 renovation and restoration, it is one of the newest, with state-of-the-art LED lighting and 21st-century heating and air-conditioning—all to compete with the elegant Hotel Atrio practically next door. (Atrio's restaurant is reviewed above.) The decor, however, still recalls the era of the conquistadors, and a few suits of armor supply a certain atmosphere in the lobby and some hallways. The dignified rooms are outfitted in a stark but appealing combination of white walls and dark-grained furniture, inspired by the austere decorative traditions of Extremadura. Modern extras that have been installed here include excellent bathrooms. Patios, which open onto masses of potted plants and flowers, are quite welcoming.

Calle Ancha 6, 10003 Cáceres. www.parador.es. ✆ **90-254-79-79.** Fax 90-252-54-32. 33 units. 120€–173€ double; 230€–347€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Garage parking 17€; street parking free. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MÉRIDA ★★★

71km (44 miles) S of Cáceres, 56km (35 miles) E of Badajoz

Founded in 25 B.C. to serve as the capital of the Roman Empire's westernmost province of Lusitania, Mérida was once called a miniature Rome. Its monuments, temples, and public works now form some of the finest Roman ruins outside Italy and make it capital of Extremaduran tourism. The city stands at the intersection of Roman roads linking Toledo with Lisbon and Salamanca with Sevilla. The Old Town can be covered on foot—in fact, that's the only way to see it. Pay scant attention to the dull modern suburb across the Guadiana River, which skirts the town with its sluggish waters.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Trains** depart from and arrive at the RENFE station on Calle Cardero (www.renfe.com; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), about .8km (½ mile) north of the Plaza de España. Each day there are six trains to and from Cáceres (trip time: 1 hr.), five trains to and from Madrid (5–6 hr.), one to and from Sevilla (3 hr.), and six to and from Badajoz (1 hr.). The fare from Madrid to Mérida is 33€ to 36€, depending on the type of train (local, morning, or night express).

The **bus** station is on Avenida de la Libertad (✆ **92-437-14-04**), near the train station. Every day there are seven buses to and from Madrid (trip time: 5½ hr.), 6 to 12 buses to and from Sevilla (3 hr.), 3 buses to and from Cáceres (1 hr.), and 5 to 10 buses to and from Badajoz (1 hr.). From Mérida to Madrid, the fare is 25€ for a local bus, 37€ for an express; Mérida to Sevilla, 13€; Mérida to Cáceres, 11€; and Mérida to Badajoz, 9€.

To drive, take the A-5 superhighway from Madrid or Lisbon. Driving time from Madrid is approximately 5 hours; from Lisbon, it's about 4½ hours. Park in front of the Roman theater and explore the town on foot.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Santa Eulalia 64 (www.turismoextremadura.com; ✆ **92-433-07-22**), is open April to September Monday to Friday 9:30am to 1:45pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday 9:30am to 2pm. Off-season hours are Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9am to 2pm.

EVENTS **The Mérida Classical Theater Festival** (www.festivaldemerida.es; ✆ **92-400-94-80**) is held in July and August. Greek and Roman classic plays are performed in Spanish in the Roman amphitheater and on the stage of the Roman theater—using these ruins from the 1st century B.C. for their original purposes.

Exploring Mérida

Walking through Mérida is a study in anachronisms: Modern shops stand cheek by jowl with Roman ruins, and no one seems to take much notice except the tourists. The **Roman bridge** ★ over the Guadiana was the longest in Roman Spain—about half a mile—and consisted of 64 arches. It was constructed of granite during the rule of Trajan or Augustus, and then restored by the Visigoths in 686. Felipe II ordered further refurbishment in 1610, and work was also done in the 19th century. The bridge crosses the river south of the center of Old Mérida, its length increased because of the way it spans two forks of the river, including an island in midstream. In 1993, it was restored yet again and turned into a pedestrian walkway. A semicircular suspension bridge was built to carry the heavy auto traffic and save the Roman bridge for future generations. Before the restoration and change, this span served as a main access road into Mérida, enduring the evolution of transportation from hooves and feet to trucks and automobiles.

Another site of interest is the old hippodrome, or **Circus Maximus,** which could seat about 30,000 spectators for chariot races. The original Roman masonry was carted off for use in other buildings, and today the site looks more like a parking lot, though excavations have uncovered rooms that may have housed gladiators. The former circus is at the end of Avenida Extremadura on the northeastern outskirts of Old Town, about .8km (½ mile) north of the Roman bridge and a 10-minute walk east of the railway station.

Arco Trajano (Trajan's Arch) lies near the heart of the Old Town beside Calle Trajano, about a block south of the Parador Vía de la Plata. An unadorned triumphal arch, it measures 15m (49 ft.) high and 9m (30 ft.) across.

Acueducto de los Milagros is the most intact of the town's two remaining Roman aqueducts; this one brought water from Proserpina, 5km (3 miles) away. From the aqueducts, water was fed into two artificially created lakes, Cornalvo and Proserpina. The aqueduct is northwest of Old Town, lying to the right of the road to Cáceres, just beyond the railway tracks. Ten arches still stand and every one of them is covered with nesting storks from February through August.

The most recently excavated monument is the **Temple of Diana** (dedicated to Caesar Augustus). Squeezed between houses on a narrow residential street, it was converted in the 17th century into the private residence of a nobleman, who used four of the original Corinthian columns in his architectural plans. The temple lies at the junction of Calle Sagasta and Calle Romero Leal, in the center of town.

While in the area, you can explore the 13th-century **Iglesia de Santa María la Mayor,** Plaza de España, on the west side of the square. It has a 16th-century chapel graced with Romanesque and Plateresque features.

Alcazaba HISTORIC SITE On the northern bank of the Guadiana River, beside the northern end of the Roman bridge (which it was meant to protect), stands the Alcázar, also known as the Conventual or the Alcazaba. Built in the 9th century by the Moors, who used fragments left from Roman and Visigothic occupations, the square structure was later granted to the Order of Santiago.

Plaza del Rastro, Calle Graciano s/n. ✆ **92-431-73-09.** Admission 4€. June–Sept daily 9:30am–1:45pm and 5–7:15pm; Oct–May daily 9:30am–1:45pm and 4–6:15pm.

Anfiteatro Romano ★ ☺ RUINS At the height of its glory in the 1st century B.C., this amphitheater could seat 14,000 to 15,000 spectators. Chariot races were held here, along with gladiator combats and mock sea battles, for which the arena would be flooded. Many of the seats were placed dangerously close to the bloodshed. You can visit some of the rooms that housed the wild animals and gladiators waiting to go into battle.

Calle José Ramón Melida s/n. ✆ **92-431-25-30.** Admission (includes Teatro Romano) 8€ adults, 7€ seniors and children 9–16, free for children 8 and under. Daily 9:30am–1:45pm and 4–6:15pm.

Museo Arqueológico de Arte Visigodo MUSEUM This archaeological museum, in front of Trajan's Arch, houses a treasure-trove of artifacts left by the conquering Visigoths.

Calle Santa Julia, Plaza de España. ✆ **92-431-01-16.** Free admission. July–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 5–7pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–June Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6pm, Sun 10am–2pm.

Museo Nacional de Arte Romano ★★★ MUSEUM This brilliantly conceived and delightfully executed museum designed by Rafael Moneo is Spain's top repository of Roman artifacts. The building is connected by an underground tunnel to the Roman amphitheater, and holds its displays like so many jewel boxes on different levels stacked around a soaring central atrium. Not only

A classical play performed at Mérida's Teatro Romano.

Mérida's main export: sunflowers.

does it contain more than 30,000 artifacts from Augusta Emerita, capital of the Roman province of Lusitania, but it also incorporates part of a Roman road discovered in the early 1980s during the building's construction. Many of the museum's sculptures come from the excavations of the Roman theater and amphitheater. You'll see mosaics, figures, pottery, glassware, coins, and bronze objects. The museum is built of redbrick in the form of a Roman basilica.

Calle José Ramón Melida s/n. http://museoarteromano.mcu.es. ✆ **92-431-16-90.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ for seniors, students, and children 17 and under. Mar–Nov Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–9pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Dec–Feb Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6pm, Sun 10am–2pm.

Teatro Romano ★★ ☺ RUINS This Roman theater, one of the best-preserved Roman ruins in the world, was built by Agrippa (Augustus' son-in-law) in 18 B.C. to house an audience of 6,000 people. Modeled after the great theaters of Rome, it was constructed using dry-stone methods, a remarkable achievement. During the reign of Hadrian (2nd c. A.D.), a tall stage wall was adorned with statues and colonnades. Behind the stage, today's visitors can explore excavations of various rooms. From the end of June to early July, you can also enjoy a season of classical plays.

José Ramón Melida s/n. ✆ **92-431-25-30.** Admission (includes Anfiteatro Romano) 8€ adults, 7€ seniors and children 9–16, free for children 8 and under. Daily 9:30am–1:45pm and 4–6:15pm.

Where to Eat

All the hotels recommended below have good restaurants.

Altair ★★ EXTREMADURAN This sister restaurant to Atrio in Cáceres (p. 237) sits on the banks of the Guadiana River by Calatrava's Lusitania Bridge and, like its sibling, is known for a fanatical devotion to local products and Extremaduran tradition. Roast suckling pig is very popular here, but portions are smaller than in Castilla, reflecting the more compact size of the *ibérico* breed.

Moreover, the roast is usually served with creamed potatoes. (Just as Extremadura got the first peppers from Mexico courtesy of Cortés, it also got the first potatoes from Peru courtesy of Pizarro.) The kitchen harks back to Arabic tradition in its roast duckling, smeared with honey and smothered with figs. Altair offers dishes a la carte, but unless you're such an expert on Extremaduran cuisine that you can assemble your own meal, the fixed-price menus are a veritable lesson in how to eat. The menus change daily.

Av. José Fernández López 7. ✆ **92-430-45-12.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–35€; fixed-price menu 75€; gourmet menu 90€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 2–4pm and Wed–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Closed last week of Aug and 1st week of Sept.

Briz 🏷 EXTREMADURAN The moment you walk into Briz, you feel transported back to mid-20th-century Spain. That's okay, because the food here is fine Extremaduran fare as it's been served for at least a century. The tapas portions available at the bar are surprisingly generous and include some nice small casseroles (lamb meatballs, for example). The dining room is popular at midday. Main dishes include heavily flavored lamb stew, and *perdiz* in salsa (a gamy partridge casserole), which might be preceded by an appetizer of peppery sausage mixed into a medley of artichokes. Peppery veal steak and fried filet of goat are other specialties. Strong, hearty local wines accompany the dishes. You'll find Briz across from the post office.

Félix Valverde Lillo 5. ✆ **92-431-93-07.** Main courses 12€–23€; fixed-price menu 10€. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7:30am–5pm and 7:30pm–midnight.

Where to Stay

Nova Roma 🏷 A late-20th-century modern business hotel, the Nova Roma is clean, comfortable, and functionally furnished. It is a good value for this heavily frequented tourist town. Guest rooms range from small to medium, and all come with firm mattresses and compact bathrooms. The Nova Roma is west of the Teatro Romano and north of the Plaza de Toros (bullring).

Suárez Somonte 42, 06800 Mérida. www.novaroma.com. ✆ **92-431-12-61.** Fax 92-430-01-60. 55 units. 59€–73€ double; 85€–93€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Mérida ★★ This *parador* is in the heart of town on the Plaza de la Constitución in the 18th-century former Convento de los Frailes de Jesús, itself built on a temple to the Concord of Augustus. It's had a long and turbulent history and was once a prison; today a salon has been installed in the cloister, and a central garden is studded with shrubbery and flowers. Old stone stairs lead to the rooms, which come in various shapes and sizes, each beautifully kept and furnished. Bathrooms are luxurious. In the 1960s, two dictators met here: Franco of Spain and Salazar of Portugal. Official rates here soar during the theater festival but fall precipitously in the off season.

Plaza de la Constitución 3, 06800 Mérida. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-431-38-00.** Fax 92-431-92-08. 82 units. 60€–161€ double; 200€–274€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 19€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

TRYP Medea ★ This small conference hotel is located a 15-minute walk west of the historic center on the opposite bank of the Guadiana River. It opened in the late 20th century and shows its generation with styling half borrowed from *Star Wars,* and half borrowed from Spanish ideas about American disco. Once you get over the plethora of mirrors, postmodern furniture crafted locally from wrought iron, and telephones that should come with an instruction manual, it's a pretty comfortable place to call home for a few days. Rooms on the fourth floor are equipped with a whirlpool and spacious terrace.

Av. de Portugal s/n, 06800 Mérida. www.solmelia.com. ☎ **92-437-24-00.** Fax 92-437-30-20. 126 units. 65€–98€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Garage parking 10€; free street parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

ZAFRA

61km (38 miles) S of Mérida, 172km (107 miles) N of Sevilla

One of the most interesting stopovers in lower Extremadura, the white-walled town of Zafra is filled with old Moorish streets and squares. The 1457 **castle** of the dukes of Feria, the most important in the autonomous region, boasts both a sumptuous 16th-century Herreran patio and the Sala Dorada, with its richly paneled ceiling. The palace is now a government-run *parador* (p. 245). You'll want to spend time on the central square, the arcaded 18th-century **Plaza Mayor ★**, and on its satellite, the 16th-century **Plaza Vieja (Old Square) ★**. In addition to these two important sights in Zafra, **Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria** is a church with nine panels by Zurbarán, displayed on the *retablo* in a chapel designed by Churriguera. The church, constructed in the Gothic-Renaissance style, has a redbrick belfry. Admission is free. It's open Monday to Friday 10:30am to 1pm and 7 to 8:30pm, and Sunday 11am to 12:30pm.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Five **buses** a day arrive from Mérida; a one-way ticket costs 12€. For schedules and prices call ☎ **92-455-00-06,** or go to www.leda.es.

Zafra lies at the junction where the highway from Sevilla (E-803) splits, heading east to Mérida and Cáceres and west to Badajoz. Driving there is easy. From Mérida to Zafra, allow an hour; from Sevilla, allow about 2½ hours. There's also a direct road from Córdoba.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza de España 8B (☎ **92-455-10-36**), is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 1:30pm and 6 to 8pm.

Where to Eat

Barbacana ★ SPANISH Dress for dinner, as this is the nicest place in town. Visitors find the upstairs dining room more relaxed than the formal ground-level room. The owner is an aficionado of the *corrida* and has adorned the walls with many paintings depicting bullfighting scenes. (Keep in mind that this corner of Extremadura is prime bull-breeding country.) The cuisine is firmly rooted in the region, so it resembles the food of the Alentejo in Portugal, western Andalucía, and the mountain dishes of Cáceres. If the season is right, you might start with a *revuelto de trigeros* (sautéed green asparagus), before settling in to a heaping plate of *merluza con almejas* (hake in clam sauce) or *cochinillo* (suckling pig).

López Asme 30. www.hotelhuertahonda.com. ✆ **92-455-41-00.** Main courses 16€–32€; fixed-price menu 47€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sun 1:30–4pm.

Where to Stay

Casa Palacio Conde de la Corte ★★ Even better and more tranquil than the *parador* (see below), this in-town mansion was built in 1940 as the private residence of a locally famous bull breeder. Bull breeders and bullfighters from all over the province, some from as far away as Madrid, frequented this place and visited the Spanish earl's stud farm. The hotel is associated with the Huerta Honda (see below), and guests can use the facilities of that hotel as well. The public rooms have grand, high ceilings. The bedrooms are tastefully and comfortably furnished, ranging from midsize to spacious, each with a tiled bathroom. You can live in style and comfort here, taking full advantage of the pool, gardens, fountains, and lawns of the beautifully manicured grounds.

Plaza del Pilar, Redondo 2, 06300 Zafra. www.condedelacorte.com. ✆ **92-456-33-11.** Fax 92-456-30-72. 15 units. 110€–160€ standard double; 140€–200€ classic double; 160€–250€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 10€. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Huerta Honda ★ 🎁 You'll get views of the citadel and Old Town from the modern, renovated rooms of this hotel in front of the Plaza del Alcázar. Living space is a bit tight, but the beds are good and the bathrooms immaculately kept. Under the same management, the adjacent restaurant **Barbacana** (see above) is a well-recommended dining room offering Castilian cuisine.

López Asme 30, 06300 Zafra. www.hotelhuertahonda.com. ✆ **92-455-41-00.** Fax 92-455-25-04. 48 units. 74€–200€ double; 120€–230€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 8.50€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; outdoor heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Zafra ★ This *parador* occupies the 15th-century castle-palace built for the dukes of Feria, one of Spain's ubiquitous noble families and great landowners. Beautiful but restrained, the interior contains the chapel of the Alcázar with an octagonal Gothic dome. Although not the finest *parador* in Extremadura, the hotel is decorated with splendid taste and is quite comfortable, boasting a patio and a garden, and the castellated ramparts certainly convey a late medieval romance. Rooms are midsize or even spacious. Bathrooms are roomy and well equipped.

Plaza Corazón de María 7, 06300 Zafra. www.parador.es. ✆ **92-455-45-40.** Fax 92-455-10-18. 45 units. 90€–180€ double; 160€–280€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking along the Plaza Corazón de María. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

The courtyard of the Parador de Zafra.

8

ANDALUCÍA

Much of what the world imagines as Spain is, in fact, Andalucía. It was the cradle of flamenco, the stomping grounds of the amorous Don Juan, and the tragic setting for *Carmen.* It is the region where bulls are bred and matadors are more famous than rock stars. Nothing in Andalucía is done halfway. The flowers are brighter, the food more spiced, and the music both more melancholy and more joyful.

Although Andalucía is often a stand-in for Spain in the popular imagination, it was, in fact, the last stronghold of the Moors, who held al-Andalus for more than 7 centuries. Consequently, Andalucía shines with all the medieval Muslim glories of Europe: the world-famous Mezquita (mosque) of Córdoba, the Alhambra palace of Granada, and (in their own way as Christian-Muslim hybrids) Sevilla's imposing Alcázar and looming Gothic cathedral. Its smaller towns can be enchanting, even haunting in their beauty: the whitewashed mountain villages, the Renaissance grace of Úbeda, the drama of gorge-split Ronda, the languor of sherry-besotted Jerez de la Frontera, and the brilliance of gleaming Cádiz. Spend a week or a month, and you'll have only skimmed the surface.

This dry, mountainous region also embraces the Costa del Sol (Málaga, Marbella, and Torremolinos), developed as the beachside playground of southern Spain and covered in the following chapter (p. 354). Go to the Costa del Sol for beach resorts, the bar scene, and watersports; visit Andalucía for its architectural wonders, signature cuisine and music, and its sheer beauty.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN ANDALUCÍA

- **Watching the Alhambra at sunset from the Albaicín:** Seen from one of the miradors of the Albaicín, the "Red Fortress" seems to glow with the fiery light of the setting sun. And for much of the year, the peaks of the Sierra Nevada behind it are crowned with snow.
- **Driving the Puerta de Las Palomas:** The Puerta de Las Palomas, or Pass of the Doves, is one of the highest mountain passes in southern Europe, at an elevation of 1,356m (4,450 ft.). The switchbacks on CA-9104 south of Zahara de la Sierra winding through the pass make the drive a sports car driver's dream. (It can be driven—more slowly—in a conventional rental car.)
- **Wandering Córdoba's Judería at dawn:** With the timeless magic of its narrow streets walled in by whitewashed buildings, Córdoba's Judería seems unchanged in over 1,000 years. At dawn, before the motorbikes crank up, the silence of the streets is broken only by the beating of doves' wings overhead.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The cliffside town of Ronda.**

- **Seeing flamenco through a dancer's eyes in Sevilla:** The Museo del Baile Flamenco in Sevilla approaches flamenco from the dancer's point of view—not surprising, since it was founded by Cristina Hoyas, one of the 20th century's greatest dancers.
- **Eating shrimp and sipping sherry in Sanlúcar:** The waters around Sanlúcar de Barrameda yield nearly a dozen species of sweet shrimp, prawns, and related crustaceans. The land around Sanlúcar yields the softest manzanilla sherry. The restaurants of Bajo de Guia beach and the Plaza Cabildo bring them together in a gourmet feast.

SEVILLA ★★★

549km (341 miles) SW of Madrid, 217km (135 miles) NW of Málaga

Orange trees, *señoritas* wearing hand-woven *mantillas,* lovesick matadors, flower-filled patios, and black-clad *flamencos* come to life in Sevilla. From its tapas bars to its flamenco patios and bullfights, this southern city epitomizes the traditions of Andalucía. And it evokes images of romance, with iconic figures ranging from Don Juan to Carmen. (Opera lovers flock to see *Don Giovanni, Carmen,* and even *The Barber of Sevilla.*) But you may just want to wander through its tangled streets flanked by palaces and monuments created with proceeds from the wealth of the New World.

Things to Do In the fourth-largest city in Spain, explore the **Catedral,** the world's biggest Gothic building and Europe's third-largest church. (The coffin of Columbus is here.) Enter the **Alcázar,** begun by the Moors in the 8th century and completed by Christian kings; a network of magnificent patios and courtyards, it is the oldest palace in Europe still used as a private residence for royals.

Shopping Sevilla is the shopping mart of Andalucía. The main artery of international goods is **Calle Sierpes,** but for Andalucían souvenirs from fans to flamenco wear, wander the **Barrio de Santa Cruz** around the Catedral and Giralda. A permanent arts-and-crafts market is also held Monday to Saturday at **El Postigo** on Calle Arfe in El Arenal. Andalucían ceramics are showcased here and all over town, although the **Triana** district is famous all over the Iberian Peninsula for its ceramic tiles.

Restaurants & Dining A North African influence is still reflected in the cuisine of Sevilla, as exemplified by the extensive use of dates, almonds, saffron, lemons, and honey-sweetened pastries. **Gazpacho** was made here even before tomatoes arrived from the New World, and fresh breads are still baked in ancient ovens. Sevilla's **tapas,** which can range from garlic-smothered shrimp to fried calamari, are famous.

Entertainment & Nightlife During the season, catch an opera (such as Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*) or a symphonic performance in **Teatro de la Maestranza.** In both **Triana** and the **Barrio de Santa Cruz,** follow your ears to find some of Spain's finest *flamenco puro*—authentic flamenco music and dance. The Sevillanos also throw the best festivals in Spain, including **Feria de Sevilla** (usually in Apr), with its revelry, all-night flamenco, bullfights, flower-decked coaches, and dancing in the streets.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Sevilla's **Aeropuerto San Pablo,** Calle Almirante Lobo (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**), is served by **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642** in the U.S., or 90-240-05-00 toll-free in Spain), which flies several times a day between Madrid (and elsewhere via Madrid) and Sevilla. The airport lies about 9.6km (6 miles) from the center of the city, along the highway leading to Carmona. A bus run by **Transportes Urbanos de Sevilla** (✆ **90-245-99-54**) meets all incoming flights and transports you into the center of Sevilla for 2.50€.

Train service into Sevilla is centralized into the **Estación Santa Justa,** Av. Kansas City s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42** for information and reservations). Bus nos. C1 and C2 take you from this train station to the bus station at Prado de San Sebastián, and bus no. EA runs to and from the airport. The high-speed AVE train has reduced travel time from Madrid to Sevilla to 2½ hours. The train makes 20 trips daily, with a stop in Córdoba, and costs 84€. A total of 37 trains a day connect Sevilla and Córdoba; the AVE train takes 45 minutes and costs 17€ to 33€. (A regional train that takes an extra half-hour goes a few times a day for 11€.) Eleven trains a day run to Málaga, taking 3 hours; there are also four trains per day to Granada (3 hr.).

Although Sevilla has several satellite **bus** stations that service small towns and nearby villages, most long-distance buses arrive and depart from the city's largest bus terminal on the southeast edge of the Old City at Prado de San Sebastián, Calle José María Osborne 11 (✆ **95-441-71-18**). Several companies make frequent runs to and from Córdoba (trip time: 2½ hr.), Málaga (3½ hr.), Granada (4 hr.), and Madrid (8 hr.). For information and ticket prices, call Alsa at ✆ **90-242-22-42.** The newer bus station at Plaza de Armas (✆ **95-490-80-40**) usually services destinations beyond Andalucía, including Portugal.

Sevilla is 549km (341 miles) southwest of Madrid and 217km (135 miles) northwest of Málaga. Several major highways converge on Sevilla, connecting it with the rest of Spain and Portugal. During periods of heavy holiday traffic, the N-V (E-90) from Madrid through Extremadura—which, at Mérida, connects with the southbound N-630 (E-803)—is usually less congested than the N-IV (E-5) through eastern Andalucía. Sevilla is easy to drive to, but extremely difficult to drive around (or to park).

GETTING AROUND Don't even consider driving around Sevilla. If you give up a parking space you will never find another. Fortunately, the city is eminently walkable. If you need to get from one end to another in a hurry, hop an inexpensive bus (1.50€) instead of paying 10€ for a taxi. The city is slowly building out its tram system, but the tram is of little practical use to sightseers. A good alternative for covering a lot of ground quickly is the municipal bicycle rental program, **SEVICI,** which provides access to bikes for a small subscription charge plus an even smaller hourly fee. The snazzy red bikes are parked in 250 areas all over the city, each with a kiosk where you can subscribe by credit card as well as pick up or deposit bikes. A 1-week membership is 5€, and time fees range from .50€ to 1€ per hour (www.sevici.es; ✆ **90-201-10-32**).

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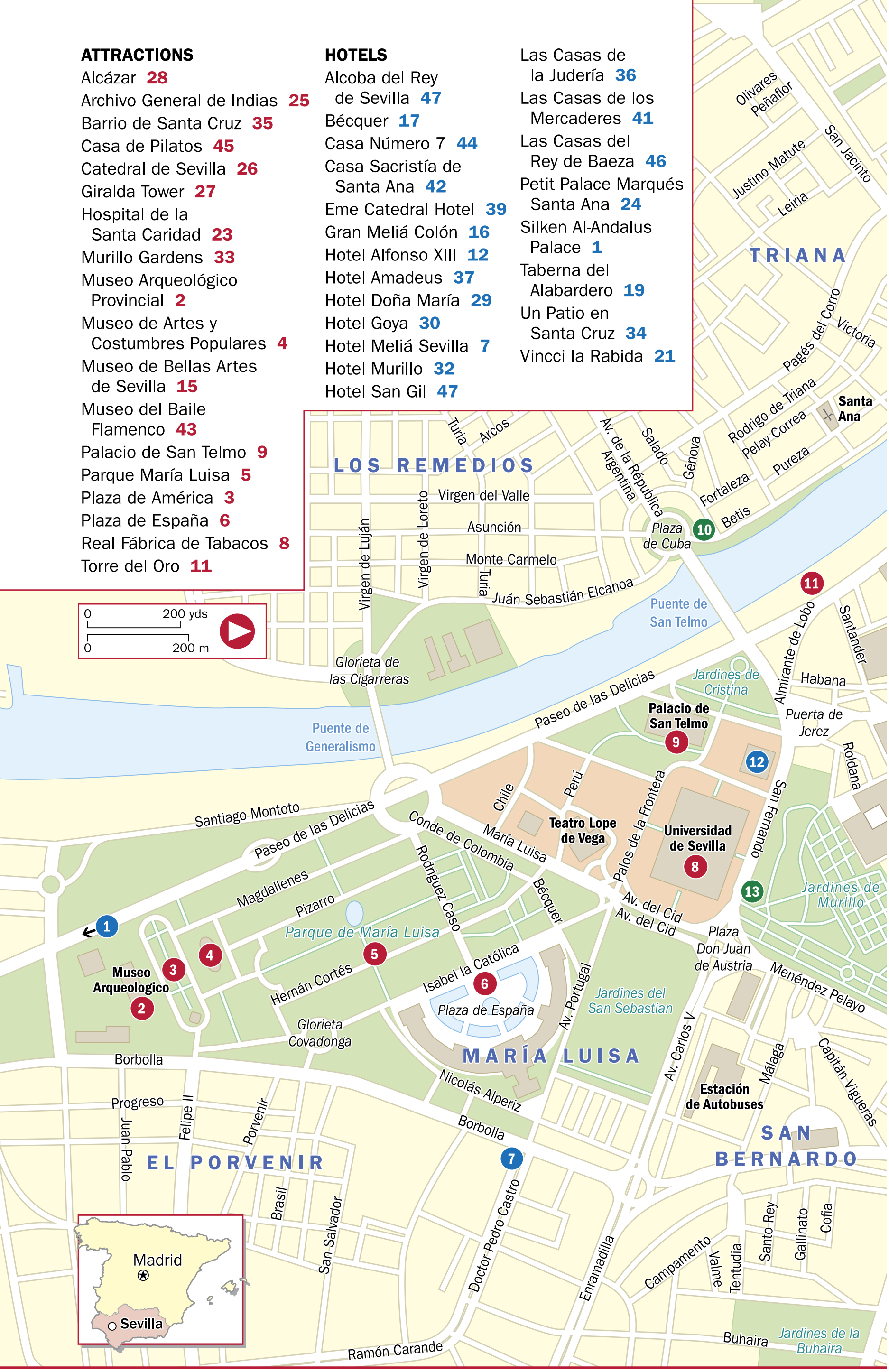
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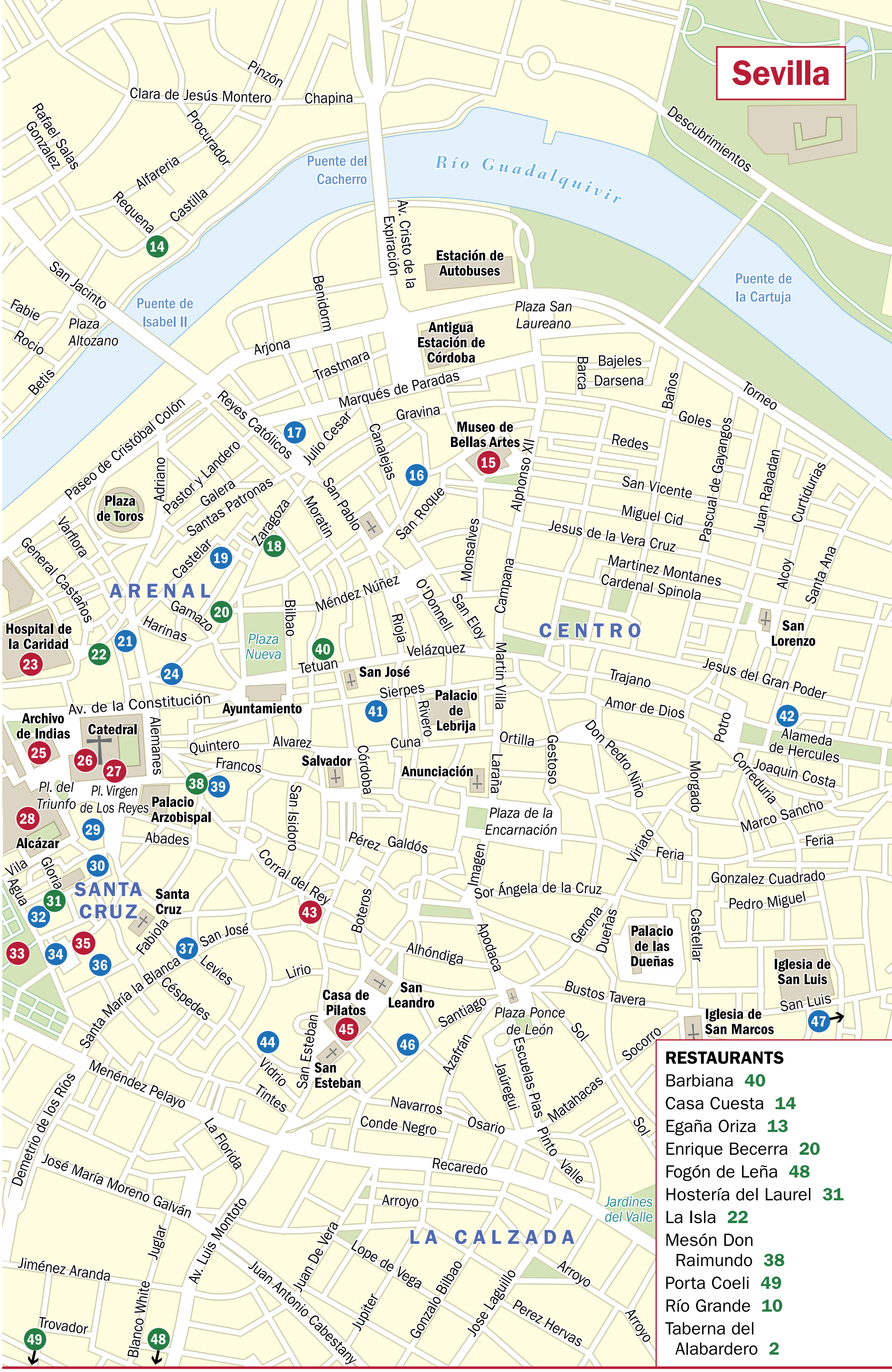
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VISITOR INFORMATION The tourist office, **Oficina de Información del Turismo,** at Av. de la Constitución 21B (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-478-20-35**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, Saturday 9:30am to 7:30pm, and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

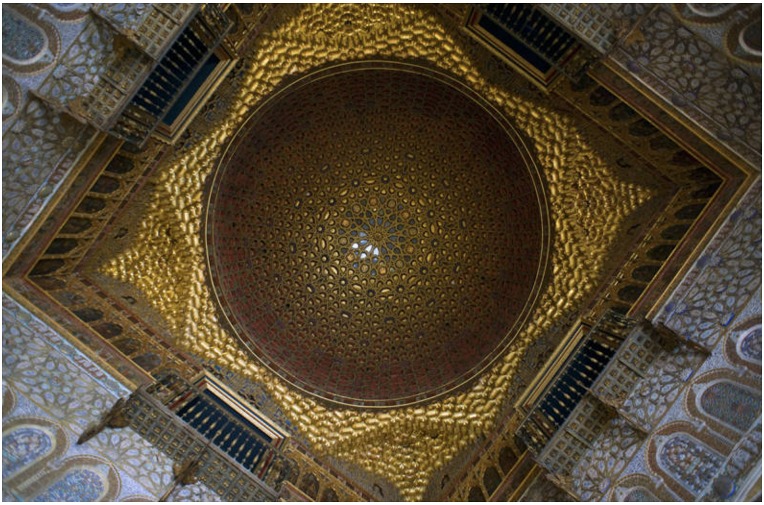
SPECIAL EVENTS The most popular times to visit Sevilla are during the **Feria de Sevilla**—the most famous fair in Spain, with bullfights, flamenco, and folklore on parade—and during **Holy Week,** when wooden figures, called *pasos,* are paraded through streets by robed penitents. See "Spain Calendar of Events," p. 40, and contact the tourist office (see above) for more information. It is essential to book lodging months in advance of both holiday periods.

FAST FACTS There's a **U.S. consulate** at Plaza Nueva 8 (✆ **95-421-87-51**), open Monday to Friday 11am to 1pm. For **medical emergencies,** go to the Hospital Virgen del Rocío, Av. Manuel Siurot s/n (✆ **95-501-20-00**), about 2km (1¼ miles) from the city center.

If you need a **cab,** call **Tele Taxi** at ✆ **95-462-22-22** or **Radio Taxi** at ✆ **95-458-36-05.** Cabs are metered and charge 1€ per kilometer at night and .85€ during the day.

Exploring Sevilla

Alcázar ★★ ☺ PALACE The complex of palaces and fortifications dates from the Almohad dynasty rule of Sevilla but was almost entirely rebuilt after the Reconquest of Sevilla in 1248. The older, more austere building is the **Palacio Gótico ★**, built by Alfonso X ("the Wise") in the 13th century. Carlos V modified the Great Hall and the Sala de Fiestas to celebrate his 1526 wedding to his Habsburg cousin (an unfortunate union that triggered the genetic problems of the dynasty). The far more beautiful and much larger **Palacio Mudéjar ★★★** was built in the 14th century by Pedro I ("the Cruel"), quite possibly employing



The mosaic interior of Sevilla's Alcázar fortress.

some of the same artisans who worked on the Alhambra in Granada. It is a tour de force of carved plaster and stone, delicate calligraphic friezes, carved wooden ceilings, and splendid decorative tiles. It is the oldest European royal residence still in use: King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofía stay here when they're in town. From the Dolls' Court to the Maidens' Court through the domed Ambassadors' Room, it contains some of the finest work of Sevillano artisans. Fernando and Isabel, who at one time lived in the Alcázar, welcomed Columbus here on his return from America. On the top floor, the Oratory of the Catholic Monarchs has a fine altar in polychrome tiles made by Pisano in 1504. The well-kept **gardens** ★, filled with beautiful flowers, shrubbery, and fruit trees, are alone worth the visit. Plan to spend about 1½ hours here.

Plaza del Triunfo s/n. www.patronato-alcazarsevilla.es. ☎ **95-450-23-23.** Admission 7.50€. Oct–Mar daily 9:30am–5pm; Apr–Sept daily 9:30am–7pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Archivo General de Indias LIBRARY The Spanish crown administered its overseas empire from Sevilla, which also served as the landing port for gold and silver bullion. Such an enterprise generated a lot of paperwork, which was eventually filed away in this building. It is a mother lode of documents, enough of which are shown in rotating exhibitions to make for a fascinating visit. The building was designed by Felipe II's favorite architect, Juan de Herrera, as the Lonja (Stock Exchange). In the 17th century, it was headquarters for the Academy of Sevilla, founded in part by the great Spanish artist Murillo. In 1785, during the reign of Carlos III, the building was turned over for use as a general records office for the Indies. Today's Archivo General de Indias contains some four million antique documents, including letters between patron Queen Isabel and explorer Columbus. These very rare documents are locked in air-conditioned storage to keep them from disintegrating. Special permission has to be acquired before examining some of them. On display in glass cases are fascinating documents in which the dreams of the early explorers come alive. Give yourself about an hour here.

Av. de la Constitución. www.mcu.es. ☎ **95-450-05-28.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm; Sun 10am–2pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Barrio de Santa Cruz ★★ HISTORIC SITE What was once a ghetto for Spanish Jews—who were forcibly expelled from Spain in 1492—is today one of Sevilla's most colorful districts. Near the old walls of the Alcázar, winding medieval streets with names like Vida (Life) and Muerte (Death) open onto pocket-size plazas. Part of the quintessential experience of visiting Sevilla is getting lost in the Barrio de Santa Cruz, only to stumble into a plaza where a waiter will offer you a seat and a drink. Flower-filled balconies with draping bougainvillea and potted geraniums jut over this labyrinth, shading you from the ferocious Andalucían summer sun. Feel free to look through numerous wrought-iron gates into patios filled with fountains and plants. In the evening, it's common to see Sevillanos sitting in the patios sipping wine under the glow of lanterns.

To enter the Barrio de Santa Cruz, turn right after leaving the Patio de Banderas exit of the Alcázar. Turn right again at Plaza de la Alianza, going down Calle Rodrigo Caro to Plaza de Doña Elvira. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Casa de Pilatos ★ HISTORIC HOME This 16th-century Andalucían palace of the dukes of Medinaceli recaptures the splendor of the past, casually combining Gothic, Mudéjar, and Plateresque styles in its courtyards, fountains,

A courtyard statue at Casa de Pilatos.

and salons. Myth says that the house of a reproduction of Pilate's House in Jerusalem, but the distinctly Sevillano character of the architecture argues otherwise. The museum's upper level is open only for a guided tour (the family still uses part of the house), but the ground floor, patios, and gardens are self-guided. The interior includes a collection of paintings by Carreño, Pantoja de la Cruz, Sebastiano del Piombo, Lucas Jordán, Batalloli, Pacheco, and Goya, as well as some atmospheric if not terribly artistic Greek and Roman statuary. The lush **gardens,** however, are worth the entrance fee, and the cascading magenta bougainvillea at the entrance is an iconic image of great wealth in a desert climate like Sevilla's. The palace is about a 7-minute walk northeast of the cathedral on the northern edge of Barrio de Santa Cruz, in a warren of labyrinthine streets whose traffic is funneled through nearby Calle de Aguilas. Plan to spend 45 minutes here.

Plaza Pilatos 1. ✆ **95-422-52-98.** Museum 8€; patio and gardens 5€. Apr–Oct daily 9am–7pm; Nov–Mar daily 9am–6pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Catedral de Sevilla and La Giralda ★★ CATHEDRAL The largest Gothic building in the world and the third-largest church in Europe, after St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London, the Catedral de Sevilla was designed by builders with a stated goal—that "those who come after us will take us for madmen." Construction began in the late 1400s on the site of an ancient mosque and took centuries to complete. The tomb of Columbus is held by four carved pallbearers.

Works of art abound here, many of them architectural, such as the 15th-century stained-glass windows, the iron screens (*rejas*) closing off the chapels, the elaborate 15th-century choir stalls, and the Gothic reredos above the main

Cathedral Alert

Shorts and T-shirts are not allowed in the cathedral. Remember to dress appropriately so you're not turned away.

A detail from the altar of the Catedral de Sevilla.

altar. On the feasts of Corpus Christi and the Immaculate Conception (and on the third day of Feria), six boys (*Los Seises*) from the choir perform a ceremonial dance on the altar dressed in Renaissance plumed hats and wielding castanets. The treasury has works by Goya, Murillo, and Zurbarán, as well as a display of skulls (*sic transit gloria mundi*). After touring the dark interior, you emerge into the sunlight of the Patio de Naranjas (Patio of the Orange Trees), with its fresh citrus scents and chirping birds.

La Giralda, the bell tower of the cathedral, is the city's most emblematic monument. Erected as a minaret in the 12th century, it has seen later additions, such as 16th-century bells. A climb to the top is the walk of a lifetime. There are no steps—you ascend a seemingly endless ramp installed so the muezzin could ride to the top on horseback to call the faithful to prayer. If you elect to walk up, you'll have a dazzling view of Sevilla. Entrance is through the cathedral. Allot about 1½ hours here.

Av. de la Constitución s/n. www.catedraldesevilla.es. ✆ **95-421-49-71.** Cathedral and tower 8€ adults, 3€ students 25 and under, free for children 14 and under. Sept–June Mon–Sat 11am–5:30pm, Sun 2:30–6:30pm; July–Aug Mon–Sat 9:30am–4:30pm, Sun 2:30–6:30pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Hospital de la Santa Caridad CHURCH This 17th-century hospital is intricately linked to the legend of Miguel Manara, portrayed by Dumas and Mérimée as the scandalous Don Juan. It was once thought that he built the institution to atone for his sins, but this has been disproved. The death of Manara's beautiful young wife in 1661 caused him such grief that he retired from society and entered the "Charity Brotherhood," burying corpses of the sick and diseased as well as condemned and executed criminals. Today the members of this brotherhood continue to look after the poor, the old, and invalids who have nowhere else to turn. Nuns will show you through the festive orange-and-sienna courtyard. The baroque chapel contains works by the 17th-century Spanish painters Murillo and Valdés-Leal. As you leave the chapel, look over the exit door for the macabre image of an archbishop being devoured by maggots. Plan to spend about 45 minutes here.

Calle Temprado 3. www.santa-caridad.es. ✆ **95-422-32-32.** Admission 5€ adults, free for children 11 and under. Mon–Sat 9am–1:30pm and 3:30–7:30pm; Sun 9am–1pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla ★★ ART MUSEUM This lovely old convent off Calle de Alfonso XII houses a collection of Spanish paintings second only to the Prado in Madrid. A whole gallery is devoted to two paintings by El Greco, and the devoutly religious, if somewhat saccharine paintings of Sevilla-born Bartolomé Esteban Murillo fill room after room. The museum owns a version of his favorite subject, the Immaculate Conception, which is impressive if

DNA Enters the Debate over Columbus's Bones

DNA samples from 500-year-old bone slivers could contradict the Dominican Republic's competing claim that Columbus was buried in Santo Domingo, and not in Sevilla. Scientists in 2006 confirmed that "at least some of the explorer's remains" were buried in Sevilla. But the debate still rages. It is entirely possible that some of Columbus's remains could have been buried in the Dominican Republic; his body was moved several times after his death. A forensic team compared DNA from the bones buried in Sevilla with DNA from the remains known to be from Columbus's brother Diego. "There was an absolute matchup," geneticists said.

These claims were refuted by Juan Bautista Mieses, the director of the Columbus Lighthouse in Santo Domingo, where the explorer's alleged remains rest. He has, however, turned down requests to take DNA samples. "We Christians believe that one does not bother the dead," Mieses said.

only for its gigantic scale. The artistic highlight of the collection is the series of monks' portraits executed by Francisco de Zurbarán, another Sevillano. These are late works and show a ghostly, almost macabre pallor, but retain Zurbarán's volumetric modeling with light and shadow. (Speaking of the macabre, Juan de Valdés Leal gets his own gallery; his version of John the Baptist's head on a platter even includes the knife.) The 19th-century galleries upstairs have sunnier images of carnal cigar rollers, society ladies, and swells making the evening *paseo*. An hour gives you enough time to see it all, but you might want to linger in the beautiful tiled central courtyard.

Plaza del Museo 9. www.museosdeandalucia.es. ✆ **95-478-65-00.** Admission 1.50€. Tues–Sat 9am–8:30pm; Sun 9am–2:30pm. Bus: B2.

Museo del Baile Flamenco ★ MUSEUM Modern-day flamenco queen Cristina Hoyos, best known for her dances in the trio of flamenco films directed by Antonio Gades, is one of the artists responsible for the rebirth of flamenco at the end of the 20th century. She founded this museum to educate outsiders about the venerable art form where music, song, and movement are inseparable. Rather than celebrate the stars, the museum treats flamenco as an art form that outlives its performers. You can get a quick overview of flamenco, or spend hours delving into the nuances of different styles, the dance and music of a dozen cultures that fed into flamenco, or even flamenco fashion and footwear. Video clips and digital music storage put nearly a century of performances at your fingertips. The museum also frequently features up-and-coming artists in weekend performances in its patio. You could spend as little as a half-hour, or as long as a full afternoon.

Calle Manuel Rojas Marcos 3. www.museoflamenco.com. ✆ **95-434-03-11.** Admission 10€ adults, 6€ children. Daily 9am–7pm. Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Parque María Luisa ★ PARK/GARDEN This park, dedicated to María Luisa, sister of Isabel II, was once the grounds of the **Palacio de San Telmo.** The palace, whose baroque facade is visible behind the deluxe Alfonso XIII Hotel, today houses a seminary. The former private royal park is now open to the public. In 1929, Sevilla hosted the Exposicíon Iberoamericana, and many Latin-American countries erected showcase buildings and pavilions in and around the park. The international stock market crash and Great Depression put a damper on the exposition, but many pavilions still stand, often serving as foreign consulates or university buildings. The park is one of the most tranquil areas in the central city and attracts Sevillanos who want to row boats on its ponds, walk along flower-bordered paths, jog, or bicycle. The most romantic (if often expensive) way to traverse the park is by rented horse and carriage.

Bus: 34, C2.

Plaza de América SQUARE This landmark square represents city planning at its best: Here you can walk through gardens planted with roses, enjoy the lily ponds and the fountains, and feel the protective shade of the palms. You can watch children feed cracked corn to immense flocks of pigeons. And here you'll find a trio of pavilions left over from the 1929 Expo. The center holds government offices; on either side are minor museums worth visiting if you have time to spare.

The **Museo Arqueológico Provincial** (✆ **95-478-64-74**) contains many artifacts from prehistoric times and the days of the Romans, Visigoths, and Moors. It's open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 8:30pm, and Sunday 9am to 2:30pm. Admission is 1.50€ for adults and free for students and children. Bus nos. 30, 31, and 34 stop there. Nearby is the **Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares** (www.museosdeandalucia.es; ✆ **95-471-23-91**). In a Mudéjar pavilion opposite the Museo Arqueológico, this is Sevilla's museum of folklore artifacts. On its ground floor you see remnants of traditional occupations, including, among others, a forge, a baker's oven, a wine press, and a tanner's shop. More interesting on this floor, though, is the stunning collection of ceramics. The upstairs is devoted to such exhibitions as the court dress of the 19th century, as well as 18th-century fabrics and embroideries from the factories of Sevilla. One from Murillo, *Children Eating Grapes,* is particularly evocative. Gold works and a varied collection of paintings and musical instruments are also displayed on this floor. It's open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 8:30pm, and Sunday 9am to 2:30pm. Admission is 1.50€ for adults and free for children and students.

Bus: 6, 34.

Plaza de España SQUARE The major building left from the Exposición Iberoamericana at the Parque María Luisa (see above) is the crescent-shaped Renaissance-style structure set on this landmark square. The architect, Aníbal González, not only designed but supervised the building of this immense structure. At a canal here you can rent rowboats for excursions into the park, or you can cross bridges spanning the canal. Set into a curved wall are alcoves focusing on the characteristics of Spain's 50 provinces, as depicted in tile murals.

Bus: C2, 70, 72.

Real Fábrica de Tabacos HISTORIC SITE When Carmen waltzed out of the tobacco factory in the first act of Bizet's opera, she made the 18th-century original in Sevilla world famous. This old tobacco factory was constructed from 1750 to 1766. By 100 years later, it employed 10,000 *cigarreras.* In the opera, Carmen was one of the lusty, passionate *cigarreras,* rolling cigars on her thighs. In the 19th century, these women were the largest female workforce in Spain. In fact, many visitors arriving today ask guides to take them to "Carmen's tobacco factory." The building, located on Calle San Fernando near the city's landmark luxury hotel, the Alfonso XIII (p. 266), is the second largest in Spain. But the Real Fábrica de

Tabacos is now part of the Universidad de Sevilla. Look for signs of its former role in the bas-reliefs of tobacco plants and Indians over the main entrances. You'll also see bas-reliefs of Columbus and Cortés. Then you can wander through the grounds for a look at student life, Sevillano-style. The factory is directly south of the Alcázar gardens.

Tram: Plaza Nueva. Numerous bus services pass this area.

Torre del Oro MUSEUM This 12-sided tower erected in the 13th century keeps watch on the Guadalquivir River. The Gold Tower is so named because it was once the storage place for gold from the Americas that had arrived by ship at Sevilla. The tower has been restored and turned into a maritime museum, the **Museo Náutico,** displaying drawings and engravings of the port of Sevilla in its golden heyday. Twenty minutes should be sufficient here.

The Torre del Oro.

Paseo de Cristóbal Colón. ✆ **95-422-24-19.** Admission 2€; free Tues. Tues–Fri 9:30am–1:30pm; Sat–Sun 10:30am–1:30pm. Closed Aug. Bus: C3, 5, 40, 41, 42.

Triana HISTORIC SITE Across the Guadalquivir from the city center, Triana is Sevilla with an edge. The working-class neighborhood is the traditional quarter of fishermen and *gitanos,* or Gypsies. It has also been the birthplace of many a famous bullfighter—all of whom, it seems, have been memorialized on street corners by commemorative plaques. This is also the neighborhood of *alfarerías,* makers of the traditional decorative tile for which Sevilla is world famous. The tile

Olé: A Day at the Bullfight

From Easter to late summer, some of the best bullfighters in Spain appear at the **Maestranza Plaza de Toros ★**, on Paseo de Colón (www.plazadetorosdelamaestranza.com; ✆ **95-450-13-82**). One of the two leading bullrings in the entire country, the stadium attracts matadors whose fights often get television and newspaper coverage throughout Iberia. Unless there's a special festival going on, bullfights *(corridas)* occur on Sunday; the best are staged during Feria de Sevilla celebrations. Tickets tend to be pricey and should be purchased in advance at the ticket office *(despacho de entradas)* on Calle Adriano, beside the Maestranza. You'll find many unofficial ticket-vending kiosks placed strategically along the main shopping street, Calle Sierpes, but they charge a 20% commission—or a lot more if they think they can get it. You may find a tour of the ring even more satisfactory (if less exciting) than attending a *corrida.* Guided tours of the ring, the infirmary, and the chapel are offered daily 9:30am to 7pm except on days of a bullfight. They cost 4€.

A matador facing down a bull at Sevilla's Maestranza bullring.

companies are concentrated on Calle San Jorge and surrounding streets, and most have sales rooms open to the public. Ceramics are very old in Triana—legend says that the neighborhood patrons, 3rd-century martyrs Santa Justa and Santa Rufina, were Triana potters.

The riverfront at the foot of Puente Isabel II is called the **Puerto de Triana,** and it is filled with small *tabernas* and *marisquerías* (shellfish restaurants) that set up outdoor tables during warm weather. This is the best area to head for early evening tapas as well as late-night flamenco a few streets in from the riverbank. Farther east along the river, approaching Puente San Telmo, Triana loses its rough edges and gives way to a number of handsome riverfront restaurants.

Bus: B2, C3, 43.

Where to Eat

VERY EXPENSIVE

Egaña Oriza ★★★ BASQUE/SPANISH Sevilla's most stylish restaurant is within the conservatory of a restored mansion adjacent to the Murillo Gardens. Its reputation stems in large part from a game-heavy menu in a region otherwise devoted to seafood. The restaurant was opened by Basque-born owner/chef José Mari Egaña, who combines his passion for hunting with his flair for cooking. Specialties depend on the season but might include ostrich carpaccio, gazpacho with prawns, steak with foie gras in grape sauce, casserole of wild boar with cherries and raisins, duck *quenelles* in a potato nest with apple purée, and woodcock flamed in Spanish brandy. The view from the dining room encompasses a garden and a wall that formed part of the fortifications of Muslim Sevilla.

San Fernando 41. www.restauranteoriza.com. ✆ **95-422-72-54.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–28€; fixed-price menus 18€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Aug. Bus: 21 or 23.

La Isla SPANISH/ANDALUCÍAN Two large Andalucían dining rooms (with thick plaster walls, tile floors, and taurine memorabilia) make up this elegant restaurant in the Arenal district near the bullring. The seafood is trucked or flown in from Galicia or trucked over from Huelva, one of Andalucía's major ports, and is always fresh. Begin with a great starter such as monkfish and shrimp soup, followed by such main dishes as grilled red mullet or filet of sole baked in a cream sauce. Succulent steaks can be grilled with ham and mushrooms or smothered in roasted red peppers and onions. The restaurant, a short walk from the cathedral, is within a very old building erected, the owners say, on foundations laid by the ancient Romans.

Arfe 25. www.restaurantelaisla.com. ✆ **95-421-26-31.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–37€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–5:30pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Bus: 21, 25, 41, or 42.

EXPENSIVE

Enrique Becerra ★ ANDALUCÍAN Near the cathedral and Plaza Nueva, this popular tapas bar and dining spot has a cozy, intimate setting that makes you feel welcome and appreciated. While perusing the menu, you can sip dry Tío Pepe and nibble herb-cured olives with lemon peel. The cookery pleases gourmets and gourmands with such dishes as Norwegian salmon garnished with fresh herbs, swordfish in a sherry sauce, or lamb meatballs flavored with mint. The lemon sorbet with champagne is a good way to end your meal. The ice-cold sangria is great for hot summer days. The wine list is one of Sevilla's best.

Gamazo 2. www.enriquebecerra.com. ✆ **95-421-30-49.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–27€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4:30pm and 8pm–midnight (closed Sat July–Aug). Bus: 21, 25, 30, or 40.

Hostería del Laurel ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN This hidden treasure is tucked into a charming building on tiny, difficult-to-find Plaza de los Venerables, in Barrio de Santa Cruz. When the 19th-century playwright José Zorrilla rewrote Tirso de Molina's original *Don Juan,* he used the Hostería del Laurel as one of the settings. It has iron-barred windows stuffed with plants. Inside, amid Andalucían tiles, beamed ceilings, and more plants, you'll enjoy good regional cooking. The *hostería* has some of the best and freshest tapas in town—such as the *zarzuelita de mariscos* (shellfish cocktail) appetizer and the fried anchovies. The catch of the day is flown in, and fish can be either grilled or fried. The chefs also turn out one of the town's best seafood-studded paellas.

Plaza de los Venerables 5. www.hosteriadellaurel.com. ✆ **95-422-02-95.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 21, 23, 41, or 42.

Taberna del Alabardero ★★ ANDALUCÍAN One of Sevilla's most prestigious restaurants occupies a 19th-century town house 3 blocks from the cathedral. Nearly every politician and diplomat who visits Sevilla dines here because the restaurant grew out of a priest's mission to save and train street youth in what is now a hotel school. They certainly left their tough pasts behind: Amid a collection of European antiques and oil paintings, you'll dine in any of two main rooms or three private ones, and perhaps precede your meal with a drink or tapas on the flowering patio. There's a garden in back with additional tables. Consider starting with a veal carpaccio or ham soup with a truffle croquette before moving on to Basque crab crêpes in white-wine sauce, or grilled wild boar chops with a savory dark oloroso sherry sauce and lentils.

Calle Zaragoza 20. www.tabernadelalabardero.es. ✆ **95-450-27-21.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 19€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4:30pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Bus: 21, 25, 30, or 43.

MODERATE

Barbiana ★★ ANDALUCÍAN/SEAFOOD Close to the Plaza Nueva in the heart of Sevilla, this superb seafood restaurant gets fresh fish daily from the Huelva coast and the Bay of Cádiz, and every few days from the Galician coast. In classic Andalucían fashion, you enter through a tapas bar to get to the cluster of rustically decorated dining rooms in the back. The trick here is not to consume so much wine and tapas in the front that you are too stuffed to enjoy the main courses. If you visit for lunch, you can try the chef's specialty, seafood with rice (not available in the evening). Some of the best items on the menu are *ortiguilla,* a sea anemone quick-fried in oil, and the *tortillitas de camarones,* chickpea fritters with bits of chopped shrimp and fresh scallions. If you're going to order shellfish, the specialty here since it comes from the Bay of Cádiz, get it grilled (*a la plancha*). Fresh fish is also available grilled with a zesty sauce, or deep-fried. Keep an eye out for the *sargo* (rockfish), which is grilled and flavored with garlic juice and served with sweet roasted red peppers.

Calle Albareda 11. www.restaurantebarbiana.com. ✆ **95-422-44-02.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–24€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–5pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 21, 25, 30, or 40.

Casa Cuesta ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN This is a fine choice in Triana, the old quarter of Gypsies and fishermen across the river from the Sevilla's medieval center. The old-fashioned venue, which dates from 1880, is warm and old-fashioned. With its geometric tile work, checkerboard-patterned marble floors, high ceilings, and ornate 19th-century bar, Casa Cuesta is a great place for lunch or dinner, or just for drinks and some tapas. The biggest of the dining-room tables is round and features a rough-hewed tree trunk rising from its center to support part of the massive ceiling and a wrought-iron lighting fixture. The well-prepared Spanish food includes cured Iberian ham, fried meats and fish, *raciones* (servings) of potato salad flavored lightly with olive oil, and a variety of fried meats and fish. For a starter, try Sevilla's version of *salmorejo,* a thick bread and tomato soup akin to gazpacho. The ambience in Triana is less touristy and a bit more workaday than its counterparts across the river.

Calle Castilla 1, Triana. www.casacuesta.net. ✆ **95-433-33-35.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–26€; fixed-price menus 30€–45€. MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Bus: B2 or 43.

Mesón Don Raimundo ANDALUCÍAN Near the cathedral and the landmark Virgen de los Reyes, this restaurant is not only one of the best in the heavily trodden tourist district, but also one of the most convenient lunch spots for sightseers. It is tucked away in an alleyway—a bit hard to find—off Calle Argote de Molina. Very cozy, with dark-wood furnishings, it evokes an old convent. The wine cellar is choice, and the welcome is warm. Dishes have a real taste of Andalucía, exemplified by the wood-roasted ribs of wild boar. Sherry from nearby Jerez de la Frontera flavors a sauce for the beef tenderloin. Some of the dishes display a Moorish influence, including the Mozarabic-style wild duck braised in sherry. In fall, look for the perfectly seasoned pheasant. Fish also appears, including a delicious filet of sea bass with fresh prawns, lots of garlic and olive oil, and pine nuts.

Calle Argote de Molina 26, Santa Cruz. www.mesondonraimundo.com. ✆ **95-422-33-55.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–26€. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–4pm and 7:30pm–2am. Bus: 21, 23, or 25.

Porta Coeli ★★ MEDITERRANEAN With one of Sevilla's most sophisticated decors, Porta Coeli offers some of the city's best hotel dining. Even if you're not a hotel guest, consider reserving one of 15 tables set against a backdrop of tapestry-hung walls. The flavor combinations are contemporary, and rely on fresh ingredients. The menu boasts a wide variety of dishes featuring duck with fried white beans and ham. Another savory offering is *ensalada de bacalao con tomate* (salt cod salad with tomatoes) and *arroz marinero con bogavante* (rice with crayfish). The locals rave about the *corazón de solomillo al foie con zetas al vino* (beef heart with liver and mushroom in red-wine sauce). For dessert, nothing beats the luscious napoleon with fresh fruit.

In the Hesperia Sevilla, Eduardo Dato 49. www.hesperia.es. ✆ **95-454-83-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–34€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Bus: 23.

Río Grande ANDALUCÍAN This classic Sevillano restaurant is named for the Guadalquivir River, visible through the panoramic windows. It sits near the Plaza de Cuba, in front of the Torre del Oro, and some diners come here just for the view of the city monuments. Most dishes are priced at the lower end of the scale. A meal might include stuffed sweet-pepper *flamenca,* soup with mixed fish and shellfish, braised *rabo de toro* (oxtail) in the Andalucían style, or chicken cooked with 100 cloves of garlic. A selection of fresh shellfish arrives daily. Large terraces contain a snack bar, the Río Grande Pub, and a bingo room. You can often watch sports events, such as soccer, in this pleasant (and English-speaking) spot on the river.

Calle Betis s/n. www.riogrande-sevilla.com. ✆ **95-427-39-56.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–43€; *menú degustación* 39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: C3.

INEXPENSIVE

Fogón de Leña ★ 🏷 ANDALUCÍAN With a folksy name like "wood stove," you'd expect a certain rustic quality in this landmark dining room near the Old City, and Fogón de Leña doesn't disappoint. The main door to the old building is intricately carved, and the roof is covered with traditional red-clay tiles. The two-story interior is lined with antique tiles and filled with typical Andalucían artifacts. The *pièce de résistance* is the mounted head of the last bull killed by the matador José Luis Vásquez. The food follows the decor: rustic and lusty. Savor such dishes as *chuletón de buey* (ox steak) or *carne con chimichurri* (steak with chopped parsley and garlic dressing in virgin olive oil). Desserts are made daily and include traditional puddings and tasty tarts, often with fresh fruit.

Santo Domingo de la Calzada 13. www.elfogon.com. ✆ **95-453-17-10.** Reservations required. Main courses 12€–25€; fixed-price menu 22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4:30pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Closed last 2 weeks in Aug. Bus: 24, 27, or 32.

Shopping

ART

One of the most respected galleries in Sevilla, **Galería Rafael Ortiz,** Marmoles 12 (www.galeriarafaelortiz.com; ✆ **95-421-48-74**), specializes in contemporary paintings, usually from Iberian artists. Exhibitions change frequently and inventories sell out quickly. It's open Monday 6 to 9pm, Tuesday to Friday 11am to 1:30pm and 6 to 9pm, and Saturday 11am to 1:30pm.

BOOKS

Close to Sevilla's university, **Librería Vértice,** San Fernando 33 (www.libreriavertice.com; ✆ **95-421-16-54**), stocks books in a variety of languages. The polyglot inventory ranges from the academic to Spanish romances of the soap-opera genre. It's open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and 5 to 8:30pm, and Saturday 11am to 2pm. In July and August, hours are Monday to Wednesday 9am to 2:30pm and 6 to 8:30pm, and Thursday and Friday 9am to 3pm.

CERAMICS

Near the town hall, **Martian,** Calle Sierpes 74 (✆ **95-421-34-13**), sells a wide array of painted tiles and ceramics: vases, plates, cups, serving dishes, and statues, all made in or near Sevilla. Many of the pieces use ancient Andalucían geometric patterns. Other floral motifs are rooted in Spanish traditions of the 18th century. Martian is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8:30pm.

In Triana, the tile-encrusted building of **Cerámica Santa Ana,** Calle San Jorge 31 (✆ **95-433-39-90**), might be its own best advertisement. The factory and showroom, which opened in 1870, has Sevilla's broadest and most tempting selection of painted tiles, pots, tableware, and decorative items in the *azulejo* tradition. A serving bowl for olives with a separate compartment for pits makes an authentic Spanish souvenir.

DEPARTMENT STORES

El Corte Inglés, Plaza Duque de la Victoria, 13B (www.elcorteingles.es; ✆ **95-459-70-00**), is the best of the several department stores clustered in Sevilla's commercial center. It features multilingual translators and rack after rack of every conceivable kind of merchandise for the well-stocked home, kitchen, and closet. If you're in the market for the brightly colored *feria* costumes worn by young girls during Sevilla's holidays, you'll find an impressive selection of the traditional regional fashion, along with all the latest designer fashions for every day. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 8pm.

FASHION

Iconos, Av. de la Constitución 21A (✆ **95-422-14-08**), is an idiosyncratic boutique loaded with fashion accessories for everyone from teenage girls to mature women. Silk scarves, costume jewelry, and an assortment of T-shirts with logos lettered in varying degrees of taste—they're all here. Iconos is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 9pm, Sunday from noon to 5pm.

Head for **Victorio & Lucchino,** Padre Luis María Llop 4 (www.victorioylucchino.com; ✆ **95-422-28-00**), for chic upscale fashions sold Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 1:30pm and 5:30 to 8:30pm. If you're after authentic flamenco dresses, head straight to **María Rosa,** Calle Luna 13 (✆ **95-421-72-93**). The shop also outfits men and children, but all the work is hand-sewn. You'll be shocked at the weight of the dresses.

Entertainment & Nightlife

When the sun goes down, think sherry, wine, and tapas. After a couple of drinks get you going, you might venture to a flamenco club or even try to learn the intricate steps of one of southern Spain's most addictive dances, Las Sevillanas.

DRINKS & TAPAS

Tapas are said to have originated in Andalucía, and the old-fashioned **Casa Román,** Plaza de los Venerables 1 (✆ **95-422-84-83**), in the Barrio de Santa Cruz, looks as if it has been dishing them up since day one. (It's actually been around since 1934.) Definitely include this place on your *tasca*-hopping through the Old Quarter. It's open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 4pm and 7pm to midnight, and Saturday and Sunday 11am to 4pm and 7:30pm to midnight.

As you make the rounds of tapas bars, you'll discover *pata negra* ham, made from the black-hoofed Iberian breed of pig of the same name. Surely one of the world's great hams, it has a sweet, subtle flavor, not salty like Virginia ham. Pigs here are fed on acorns.

El Rinconcillo, Gerona 42 (www.elrinconcillo.es; ✆ **95-422-31-83**), at the northern edge of Barrio de Santa Cruz, has a 1930s ambience, partly because of its real age and partly because of its owners' refusal to change one iota of the decor. It may actually be the oldest bar in Sevilla, dating from 1670. Amid dim lighting, heavy ceiling beams, and marble-topped tables, you can enjoy a beer or a full meal along with the rest of the easygoing crowd. The bartender will mark your tab in chalk on a well-worn wooden countertop. El Rinconcillo is especially known for its salads, omelets, hams, and selection of cheeses. Look for the Art Nouveau tile murals. It's open Thursday to Tuesday from 1pm to 1:30am. A complete meal will cost around 30€.

The best seafood tapas in town are served at **La Alicantina,** Plaza del Salvador 2 (www.puertodelicia.es; ✆ **95-422-61-22**), amid the glazed-tile decor typical of Sevilla. Both the bar and the sidewalk tables always overflow with patrons. The owner serves generous portions of clams marinara, fried squid, grilled shrimp, fried cod, and clams in béchamel sauce. La Alicantina, about 5 blocks north of the cathedral, is open September to June daily noon to midnight, and July and August daily 10:30am to 4pm and 8pm to 1am. Tapas range upward from 3.50€.

In the Arenal district, **Buddha del Mar ★**, Plaza del Región s/n (✆ **95-408-90-95**), is a three-floor complex filled with an attractive crowd of mostly young people who patronize its Balinese terrace and nightclub, its chill-out bar, or its top-rate restaurant. The smell of incense and an exotic decor greet you. Buddha del Mar is open Monday to Saturday 9pm to 6am. Tapas range from 6€ to 15€.

FLAMENCO

When the moon is high in Sevilla and the scent of orange blossoms is in the air, it's time to wander the alleyways of Santa Cruz in pursuit of the sound of staccato dancing. If you are at ease with crowds, enjoy *flamenco puro,* and don't mind if the other patrons push back the chairs so everyone can dance the *sevillana,* head to **Casa Anselma** at Calle Pagés de Corro 49 (no phone). Nothing much happens before 10pm, but this is the epicenter of Triana flamenco scene.

If a more formal show intrigues you, Sevilla has some of the better *tablaos,* or nightclubs, where choreographed flamenco has been performed for generations. **El Patio Sevillano,** Paseo de Cristóbal Colón 11 (www.elpatiosevillano.com; ✆ **95-421-41-20**), is a showcase for Spanish folk song and dance performed by exotically costumed dancers. The presentation includes a wide variety of Andalucían flamenco and songs, as well as classical pieces by such composers as de Falla, Albéniz, Granados, and Chueca. Two shows, at 7 and 9:30pm, are presented nightly. The cover of 37€ includes your first drink.

Consider a visit to **Los Gallos Tablao Flamenco,** Plaza de Santa Cruz 11 (www.tablaolosgallos.com; ✆ **95-421-69-81**), a reputable nightclub where male and female performers stamp, clap, and exude rigidly controlled Iberian passion on a small stage in front of appreciative observers. A cover charge of 30€ includes the first drink. No meals are served, and reservations are a good idea. Two shows are presented nightly, the first from 8 to 10pm, the second from 10:30pm to 12:30am. Its leading competitor, charging roughly the same prices with more or less the same program, is **Tablao El Arenal,** Calle Rodó 7 (www.tablaoelarenal.com; ✆ **95-421-64-92**), where you'll sit at tiny, cramped tables with barely enough room to clap—but you will clap, because of the smoldering emotions conveyed in the performances here.

Torres Macarena ★, Calle Torrijiano 29 (www.torresmacarena.com; ✆ **95-437-23-84**), is the major music hall, in Sevilla. Founded in 1974, it offers a 120-seat venue. Performances are without any kind of sound system—only the voices and instruments as they are heard naturally. Performances happen on a small stage combined with a bar or in a courtyard that also has a stage. These performances are impromptu, but here you can listen to the sounds of some of the best flamenco in the city. Torres Macarena is open Monday to Saturday 9pm to 2am.

GAY NIGHTLIFE

Sevilla has a large gay and lesbian population, much of it composed of foreigners, including Americans, Germans, and British, as well as of Andalucíans who fled here for a better life, escaping less tolerant towns and villages. Gay life thrives in such bars as **Isbiliyya Café-Bar,** Paseo de Colón (✆ **95-421-04-60**), which is usually open daily 5pm to 4am. The bar is found across the street from Puente Isabel II, near Bar Capote. Outdoor tables are magnets in summer.

THE PERFORMING ARTS

To keep abreast of what's happening in the arts and after dark in Sevilla, pick up a copy of the free monthly leaflet *El Giraldillo,* or consult the listings in the local press, *Correo de Andalucía, Sudoeste, Nueva Andalucía,* or *ABC Sevilla.* Everything is listed here, from jazz to classical music concerts and from art exhibits to dance events. You can also call a cultural hot line at ✆ **010** to find out what's happening. Most of the staff at the other end speak English.

Keep an eye out for classical concerts that are sometimes presented in the cathedral of Sevilla, the church of **San Salvador,** and the Conservatorio Superior de Música at Jesús del Gran Poder. Variety productions, including some plays for the kids, are presented at **Teatro Alameda,** Crédito (✆ **95-490-01-64**). The venerable **Teatro Lope de Vega,** Avenida María Luisa (www.teatrolopedevega.org; ✆ **95-459-08-67**), is the setting for ballet performances and classical concerts, among other events. Near Parque María Luisa, this is the leading stage of Sevilla, but performances are in Spanish.

It wasn't until the 1990s that Sevilla got its own opera house, but **Teatro de la Maestranza,** Paseo de Colón 22 (www.teatromaestranza.com; ✆ **95-422-33-44**), quickly became one of the world's premier venues for operatic performances. Naturally, the focus is on works inspired by Sevilla, including Verdi's *La Forza del Destino* and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro,* although jazz, classical music, and even the quintessentially Spanish *zarzuelas* (operettas) are also performed here. The opera house may be visited only during performances. Tickets (which vary in price, depending on the event) can be purchased daily from 10am to 2pm and 5:30 to 8:30pm at the box office in front of the theater.

Where to Stay

During Holy Week and the Feria de Sevilla, hotels often double, even triple, their rates. Price increases are often not announced until the last minute. If you're going to be in Sevilla at these times, arrive with an ironclad reservation and an agreement about the price before checking in.

VERY EXPENSIVE

EME Catedral Hotel ★★ Slowly but surely, the EME hotel group captured the cluster of fourteen 18th- and 19th-century town houses facing La Giralda and has converted them into a futuristic design concept hotel, while keeping a handful of Andalucían architectural details intact on the facade. The location is just about ideal for Sevilla, but the sparely postmodern rooms are not to everyone's taste, and those that overlook the cathedral can be noisy. The suites and two superior doubles open onto private terraces with whirlpool baths. Shaded courtyards and a panoramic rooftop pool terrace provide additional glamour, but most of the public space is taken over with dining and drinking facilities. The best of the restaurants is superchef Martin Berasategui's **Santo,** which serves contemporary Mediterranean cuisine.

Calle de los Alemanes 27, 41004 Sevilla. www.emecatedralhotel.com. ✆ **95-456-00-00.** 60 units. 150€–470€ double; 600€–950€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Bus: C5. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 2 bars; airport transfers (60€); concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Alfonso XIII ★★ The stylistic opposite of the EME, the Alfonso XIII occupies a rococo building on a corner across a traffic circle from the back of the Alcázar's gardens. Deliberately designed as a Moorish fantasy in Mudéjar style for the 1929 Exposición Iberoamericana, it was constructed to be the standard for ornate (and expensive) opulence. Now part of the Starwoods Luxury Collection, the Alfonso XIII closed for a full year for an overdue restoration. The rooms and hallways glitter with hand-painted tiles, acres of marble and mahogany, antique furniture embellished with intricately embossed leather, and a spaciousness that's nothing short of majestic.

San Fernando 2, 41004 Sevilla. www.starwoodhotels.com. ✆ **800/325-3589** in the U.S. and Canada, or 95-491-70-00. Fax 95-491-70-99. 147 units. 400€–700€ double; from 750€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 10 or 15. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfers (100€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; outdoor saltwater pool; room service; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (4€ per hr.).

EXPENSIVE

Casa Número 7 ★★ 🎁 This is as close as you can get to staying in an elegant private home in Sevilla. Next to the Santa Cruz barrio, the little inn is in a beautiful, sensitively restored 19th-century mansion where you live in style, with a butler to serve you breakfast. Small in size, Casa Número 7 is big on style and grace notes, recapturing the aura of old Sevilla. It is a decorous oasis in the midst of a bustling city. The building envelops an old atrium and is filled with such touches as family photographs, Oriental area rugs, a marble fireplace, and floral-print love seats. Rooms are individually decorated in vintage Sevillano style, with impeccable taste and an eye to comfort. The spacious Yellow Room has a "Juliet balcony" overlooking the street.

Vírgenes 7, 41004 Sevilla. www.casanumero7.com. ✆ **95-422-15-81.** Fax 95-421-45-27. 6 units. 177€–275€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Parking nearby 15€. Bus: 10, 15, 24, or 32. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Gran Meliá Colón This hotel opened more than 80 years ago and became a landmark over the years, celebrated for its neo-baroque design. After a 1-year makeover, it reopened in 2009 with its original dome crowning the open and airy lobby. The hotel still sits in the old quarter, but the makeover pushed it into the 21st century, with a sensory-rejuvenation spa, a solarium terrace, a hydromassage swimming pool, lots of high-tech gadgets, and decor by such postmodernists as Philippe Starck. In keeping with the edgy modernism, all the extra padding and layered linens have been banished from the bedrooms, leaving them a little spare for a hotel of this era.

Canalejas 1, 41001 Sevilla. www.gran-melia-colon.com. ✆ **95-450-55-99.** Fax 95-422-09-38. 146 units. 165€–490€ double; from 450€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 32€. Bus: 10 or 15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; health club and spa; heated indoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Hospes Las Casas del Rey de Baeza ★ Less luxurious (and more expensive) than its sibling, Las Casas de la Judería (see below), this antique hotel close to the Casa de Pilatos is still a winning choice with its stone floors and 19th-century Andalucían architecture. A hotel since 1998, it has an interior patio surrounded by a cozy coterie of rooms and a long Andalucían balcony. Some of the beautifully furnished rooms have living rooms, and the decor is finely honed in marble and wood with comfortable furnishings.

Calle Santiago, Plaza Jesús de la Redención 2, 41003 Sevilla. www.hospes.com. ✆ **95-456-14-96.** Fax 95-456-14-41. 41 units. 129€–310€ double; 226€–520€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 10, 15, 20, or 32. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD player (in some), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Vincci La Rabida 🎁 This restored *palacio* in the Barrio del Arenal neighborhood, near the cathedral, was erected in the typical Andalucían style of the 18th century. The hotel is only a short walk from many of the city's major attractions, including its main shopping district. The restored bedrooms are handsomely, even elegantly, furnished in a typical Andalucían manner. Best are the two suites with large balconies overlooking Sevilla and offering panoramic views of the cathedral and the Giralda Tower. The suites also have a separate sitting room and a Jacuzzi. The hotel's restaurant features a traditional Sevillano cuisine. A special feature here is an outdoor sun terrace with a hot tub.

Calle Castelar 24, 41001 Sevilla. www.vinccihoteles.com. ✆ **95-450-12-80.** Fax 95-421-66-00. 83 units. 77€–232€ double; 150€–467€ family room/suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Bus: AC, C5, or 43. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (10€ per hr.).

MODERATE

Alcoba del Rey de Sevilla ★ 🎁 This small boutique hotel, in a building dating from the 13th century, is inspired by the Sevilla of al-Andalus. Located adjacent to the Basilica de Macarena, the building incorporates some of the same kind of handcrafted materials as were used 8 centuries ago. Rooms open onto a central Andalucían patio. Each midsize bedroom not only features an exotic name—Princess Zaida or Rumaykiyya, for example—but also has a distinctive decor that might include horseshoe arches, silk fabrics, carved headboards, king-size beds with canopy, and the scent of cedar furnishings. The stuccoed bathrooms are a special feature with much use made of marble. Guests can buy everything they see in the hotel, even the beds and furnishings.

Calle Bécquer, 41009 Sevilla. www.alcobadelrey.com. ✆ **95-491-58-00.** Fax 95-491-56-75. 15 units. 98€–173€ double; 150€–278€ suites. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Bus: C1, C2, or 32. **Amenities:** Concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Bécquer 🏷 A short walk from the action of the Sevilla bullring and only 2 blocks from the river, Bécquer is on a street full of cafes where you can order tapas and enjoy Andalucían wine. The Museo de Bellas Artes is also nearby. Built in the 1970s, the hotel was enlarged and much renovated. It occupies the site of a former mansion and retains many objets d'art rescued before that building was demolished. You register in a modern lobby before being shown to one of the functionally furnished rooms—a good value in a pricey city, as most units are at the lower end of the price scale.

Calle Reyes Católicos 4, 41001 Sevilla. www.hotelbecquer.com. ✆ **95-422-89-00.** Fax 95-421-44-00. 141 units. 73€–161€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: C1, C2, or C4. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; outdoor rooftop pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Casa Sacristía de Santa Ana 🎁 A former 18th-century sacristy, this fully modernized hotel stands near the Alameda of Hércules—frankly a bit of a hike from most of the sights of Sevilla, but close to the clubs and nightlife. You'll find satellite TV, remote-control AC, and similar gadgetry (as well as fully modern, even sumptuous bathrooms), yet the lines remain traditionally Andalucían. The rooms are spacious enough to accommodate two suitcases and still walk around, and they are decorated and designed for comfort and style.

Alameda de Hércules 22, 41022 Sevilla. www.hotelsacristia.com. ✆ **95-491-57-22.** Fax 95-490-53-16. 25 units. 60€–167€ double; 110€–220€ junior suite. MC, V. No parking. Bus: C1, C2, or C4. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Doña María ★ ☺ Highlights here include the Iberian antiques in the stone lobby and upper hallways and a location a few steps from the cathedral, which allows for dramatic views from the rooftop terrace. An ornate neoclassical entryway is offset with a pure white facade and iron balconies, which hint at the building's origin in the 1840s as a private villa. Amid the flowering plants on the upper floor you'll find garden-style lattices and antique wrought-iron railings. Room sizes range from small to large enough for the entire family, and some have four-poster beds, while others have a handful of antique reproductions. Light sleepers might find the noise of the church bells jarring. There are a garden courtyard and a rooftop pool.

Don Remondo 19, 41004 Sevilla. www.hdmaria.com. ☎ **95-422-49-90.** Fax 95-421-95-46. 64 units. 97€–183€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Bus: C1, C2, or C4. **Amenities:** 2 bars; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Meliá Sevilla A short walk east of the Plaza de Espaná, near the Parque María Luisa, this is the most tasteful and international of Sevilla's modern skyscraper hotels. Rising 11 stories, it incorporates acres of white marble as well as several dozen shopping boutiques and private apartments into its L-shaped floor plan. Bedroom decor is contemporary and comfortable, and rooms in the front have a view. The Meliá was a favorite of the planners of the 1992 Expo—but the hotel lacks the personal touch provided by the staff at the Alfonso XIII (p. 266), and it is inconvenient for sightseeing on foot.

Doctor Pedro de Castro 1, 41004 Sevilla. www.melia-hotels.com. ☎ **800/336-3542** in the U.S., or 95-442-26-11. Fax 95-442-16-08. 365 units. 95€–145€ double; from 165€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 13€. Bus: 30, 31, 33, or 72. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (13€ per day).

Hotel San Gil ★★ 🎁 This landmark building from 1901, in a setting of towering palm trees, captures some of the colonial style of old Sevilla. As a guest, you can enjoy an aura of old Andalucía while taking advantage of modern amenities. Located near the historic Macarena Wall and the Santa Cruz barrio, the hotel has a rooftop swimming pool that opens onto vistas of the surrounding cityscape. Inside, the hotel is richly endowed with old Andalucían styling, including an elaborate use of tiles. Bedrooms are midsize for the most part and decorated in creamy colors with light wooden furnishings. Like most hotels near Sevilla's historic district, the San Gil is extremely difficult to reach by car because it is nestled in a warren of one-way streets.

Parras 28, 41002 Sevilla. www.sevillahotelsangil.com. ☎ **95-490-68-11.** Fax 95-490-69-39. 60 units. 77€–221€ double; 109€–253€ junior suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: C3, 2, 13, or 14. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchenette (in some), minibar.

Las Casas de la Judería ★★ 🏷 In the Barrio de Santa Cruz, this hotel is installed in a palace from the 1600s once owned by the duke of Beja, a great character in the history of Spain's aristocracy and known as the patron of Cervantes. Within easy walking distance of the cathedral and other sights, this hotel has been one of the best places to stay in Sevilla since 1991. All the rooms are medium in size, as well as individually decorated and furnished in an antique style, sometimes with four-poster beds; all have balconies, some facing street scenes and others opening onto one of the four interior patios. Many units have living rooms, and all the suites contain whirlpool tubs.

Plaza Santa María la Blanca, Callejón de Dos Hermanas 7, 41004 Sevilla. www.casasypalacios.com. ☎ **95-441-51-50.** Fax 95-442-21-70. 118 units. 110€–276€ double; 243€–437€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 21 or 23. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Las Casas de los Mercaderes ★ 🎁 Charming and historic, this boutique-style hotel was built in the 18th century (with alterations in the 19th c.) as a patio-centered three-story private home that's about as Sevillano as you can get. Today, the patio that for many generations remained open to the sky is covered with a Victorian-inspired glass-and-iron canopy, allowing the courtyard to be plushly furnished with kilim carpets and wicker chairs that gracefully show off a ring of delicate granite columns. Bedrooms are cozy and relatively plush, with big curtains, carpets, and hand-carved furniture resting on marble floors. The cathedral lies within a 4-minute walk, and the staff is attentive.

Calle Álvarez Quintero 9–13, 41004 Sevilla. www.casasypalacios.com. ✆ **95-422-58-58.** Fax 95-422-98-84. 47 units. 78€–123€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€ per day. Bus: 21, 23, 41, or 42. **Amenities:** 2 bars; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Petit Palace Marqués Santa Ana In the Arenal sector, within walking distance of the cathedral, this chain hotel occupies a building dating from the 19th century. Sensitively restored to receive modern guests, the midsize bedrooms are updated and designed for comfort. The decor is self-consciously contemporary, and guests will find a number of little-used conveniences such as trouser presses and showers with far too many jets and controls. All rooms are furnished with a laptop, in case you didn't bring your own.

Jimios 9–11, 41002 Sevilla. www.hotelmarquessantaana.com. ✆ **95-422-18-12.** Fax 95-422-89-93. 57 units. 102€–194€ double; 113€–226€ triple; 151€–248€ quad. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: C5. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Silken Al-Andalus Palace No hotel in Sevilla has a more avant-garde design than this modern business and convention hotel, located in the Heliópolis district, an upmarket residential area about a 20-minute taxi ride south of the cathedral. The front public rooms are suspended by cable, and the glass facade reflects both the blue skies of Sevilla and the marble floors. The large guest rooms are elegantly appointed, with big windows; some have balconies. The decor and furnishings are minimalist—functional but modern. Many units have small living rooms and suites with their own breakfast bars.

Av. Palmera s/n, 41012 Sevilla. www.hoteles-silken.com. ✆ **95-423-06-00.** Fax 95-423-19-12. 623 units. 76€–153€ double; from 1,200€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. Bus: 34. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; concierge; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Taberna del Alabardero ★★ 🎁 This tavern now houses one of the most charming places to stay in the city. Close to the bullring and a 5-minute walk from the cathedral, this restored 19th-century mansion has a spectacular central patio and a romantic atmosphere. The units on the third floor have balconies overlooking street scenes as well as whirlpool tubs. All the rooms are spacious and comfortable, each individually decorated in a specific regional style.

Zaragoza 20, 41001 Sevilla. www.tabernadelalabardero.es. ✆ **95-450-27-21.** Fax 95-456-36-66. 7 units. 90€–150€ double; 100€–190€ junior suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 21, 25, 30, or 43. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Amadeus ★ 🎁 In the Santa Cruz district, this family-run small hotel honors Mozart with a musical theme throughout. Instruments line some of the walls, and there are pianos in some rooms. An 18th-century manor house was totally renovated and adapted to receive today's guests, although the Sevillano style was left intact. María Guerrero and her helpful daughters are the gracious hosts. Designer bedrooms are midsize to spacious, created with your comfort in mind. Breakfast is served on the roof terrace, opening onto views of Giralda Tower in the distance.

Calle Farnesio 6, Barrio de Santa Cruz, 41004 Sevilla. www.hotelamadeussevilla.com. ✆ **95-450-14-43.** Fax 95-450-00-19. 14 units. 77€–160€ double; 180€–200€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 16€. Bus: C3, C4, 1, or 21. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Goya Its location, in a narrow-fronted town house in the oldest part of the Barrio de Santa Cruz, is one of the Goya's strongest virtues, but the building's gold-and-white facade, ornate iron railings, and picture-postcard demeanor are no slouch either. Rooms are cozy (that is, small) and simple. Guests congregate in the marble-floored ground-level salon, where a skylight floods the couches and comfortable chairs with sunlight. Be sure to reserve well in advance here, and note that no meals are served.

Mateus Gago 31, 41004 Sevilla. www.hostalgoyasevilla.com. ✆ **95-421-11-70.** Fax 95-456-29-88. 19 units. 55€–150€ double. MC, V. Bus: 10, 12, 41, or 42. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Murillo Tucked away on a narrow street in the heart of Santa Cruz, this *residencia* (named after the artist who used to live in this district) is very close to the gardens of the Alcázar. Inside, the lounges harbor some fine architectural characteristics and antique reproductions. Many of the rooms are cheerless and gloomy, so have a look before checking in. You can reach the hotel from Avenida Menéndez y Pelayo, a wide avenue west of the Parque María Luisa, where a sign leads you through the **Murillo Gardens** on the left.

Calle Lope de Rueda 7–9, 41004 Sevilla. www.hotelmurillo.com. ✆ **95-421-60-95.** Fax 95-421-96-16. 57 units. 50€–160€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€ nearby. Bus: 21 or 23. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Un Patio en Santa Cruz ★ 🏷 In the historic Old Town, a traditional Sevillano house from the early 19th century has been beautifully restored and made into a modern hotel. Exceptional features are a plant-filled white-marble patio and a panoramic terrace with bar opening onto a view of the Giralda. Even though the facade is traditional, the interior is strikingly contemporary, offering reasonably priced bedrooms that are well furnished and cozy with double-glazed windows. The hotel is on a pedestrian street, within walking distance of the cathedral and Alcázar. The rooms on the top floor have direct access to the roof terrace.

Calle Doncellas 15, 41004 Sevilla. www.patiosantacruz.com. ✆ **95-453-94-13.** Fax 95-453-94-61. 13 units. 70€–128€ double; 78€–138€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 21 or 22. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Luxurious Country Retreats Nearby

El Palacio de San Benito ★★★ 🎁 The most exclusive B&B in southern Spain, this treasure lies in a stunningly converted palace that represents the epitome of luxury living as practiced by Spanish dons in the 14th and 15th centuries. You'll need a car to reach the little Moorish town of **Cazalla de la Sierra,** a 75km (47-mile) drive north of the center of Sevilla. Sevilla's best-known decorator, Manuel Morales de Jódar, is responsible for the restoration of the palace and for its decor. Various tapestries from Aubusson in France and from Brussels decorate the palace. The library, with its Carrara marble fireplace, evokes the best of 19th-century Victoriana. The bedrooms are sumptuous and beautifully furnished, most often with 17th- and 18th-century pieces.

41370 Cazalla de la Sierra, Sevilla. www.palaciodesanbenito.com. ✆ **95-488-33-36.** Fax 95-488-31-62. 9 units. 90€–210€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Side Trips from Sevilla

CARMONA ★

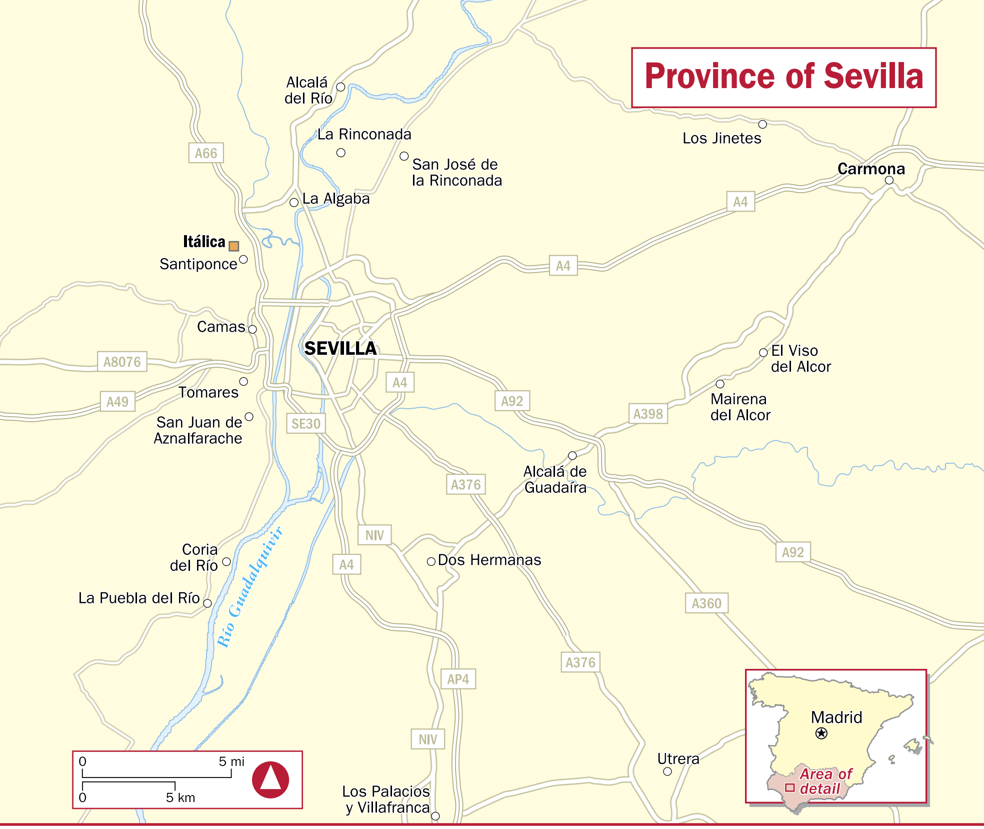
An easy hour-long bus trip from the main terminal in Sevilla, Carmona is an ancient city dating from Neolithic times and containing significant Roman ruins. Thirty-four kilometers (21 miles) east of Sevilla, it grew in power and prestige under the Moors, establishing ties with Castilla in 1252.

Surrounded by fortified walls, Carmona has three Moorish fortresses—one a *parador,* and the other two the Alcázar de la Puerta de Córdoba and Alcázar de la Puerta de Sevilla. The most impressive attraction is **Sevilla Gate,** with its double Moorish arch opposite St. Pedro's Church. Note, too, Córdoba Gate, on Calle Santa María de Gracia, which was attached to the ancient Roman walls in the 17th century.

The town itself is a national landmark, filled with narrow streets, whitewashed walls, and Renaissance mansions. **Plaza San Fernando** is the most important square, with many elegant 17th-century houses. The most important church is dedicated to Santa María and stands on Calle Martín López. You enter a Moorish patio before exploring the interior and its 15th-century white vaulting.

In the area known as Jorge Bonsor (named for the original discoverer of the ruins) is a Roman amphitheater as well as a Roman necropolis containing the remains of 1,000 families who lived in and around Carmona 2,000 years ago. Of the two important tombs, the Elephant Vault consists of three dining rooms and a kitchen. The other, the Servilia Tomb, was the size of a nobleman's villa. Found here is **Museo de la Ciudad** (www.museociudad.carmona.org; ✆ **95-423-24-01**), displaying artifacts discovered at the site. From September to June 15, hours are Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm, Monday 11am to 2pm; from June 16 to August, it's open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 6:30 to 8:30pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 2pm. Admission is 3€ for adults and free for students and children.

If you're driving to Carmona, exit from Sevilla's eastern periphery onto the N-V superhighway, follow the signs to the airport, and then proceed to Carmona on the road to Madrid. The Carmona turnoff is clearly marked.


Province of Sevilla
Alcalá del Río
La Rinconada
San José de la Rinconada
La Algaba
Los Jinetes
Carmona
Itálica
Santiponce
Camas
SEVILLA
Tomares
San Juan de Aznalfarache
El Viso del Alcor
Mairena del Alcor
Alcalá de Guadaíra
Coria del Río
La Puebla del Río
Río Guadalquivir
Dos Hermanas
Utrera
Los Palacios y Villafranca
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If you want to stay overnight, try the elegant **Casa de Carmona ★★**, Plaza de Lasso 1, 41410 Carmona (www.casadecarmona.com; ✆ **95-419-10-00;** fax 95-419-01-89). It was built as the home of the Lasso family during the 1500s. Several years ago, a team of entrepreneurs turned it into a luxury hotel but retained the marble columns, massive masonry, and graceful proportions of the original. Each of the 32 units is a cozy enclave of opulent furnishings, with a theme inspired by ancient Rome, medieval Andalucía, or Renaissance Spain. Rates are 110€ to 225€ for a double, 600€ to 1,000€ for a suite.

ITÁLICA

Lovers of Roman history shouldn't miss Itálica (✆ **95-562-22-66**), the ruins of an ancient city northwest of Sevilla on the major road to Lisbon, near the small town of Santiponce.

After the battle of Ilipa, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus founded Itálica in 206 B.C. Two of the most famous Roman emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, were born here. Indeed, master builder Hadrian was to have a major influence on his hometown. During his reign, the **amphitheater,** the ruins of which can be seen today, was among the largest in the Roman Empire. Lead pipes that carried water from the Guadalquivir River still remain. A small **museum** displays some of the

Córdoba Gate in Carmona.

Roman statuary found here, although the finest pieces have been shipped to Sevilla. Many mosaics, depicting beasts, gods, and birds, are on exhibit, and others are constantly being discovered. The ruins, including a Roman theater, can be explored for 1.50€. The site is open April to September Tuesday to Saturday 8:30am to 8:30pm and Sunday 10am to 4pm. From October to March, it's open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 6:30pm and Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

If you're driving, exit from the northwest periphery of Sevilla, and follow the signs for Highway E-803 in the direction of Zafra and Lisbon. A bus marked M-172 goes to Itália, and departures are from the Estación de Autobuses at Plaza de Armas. Buses depart every hour for the 30-minute trip.

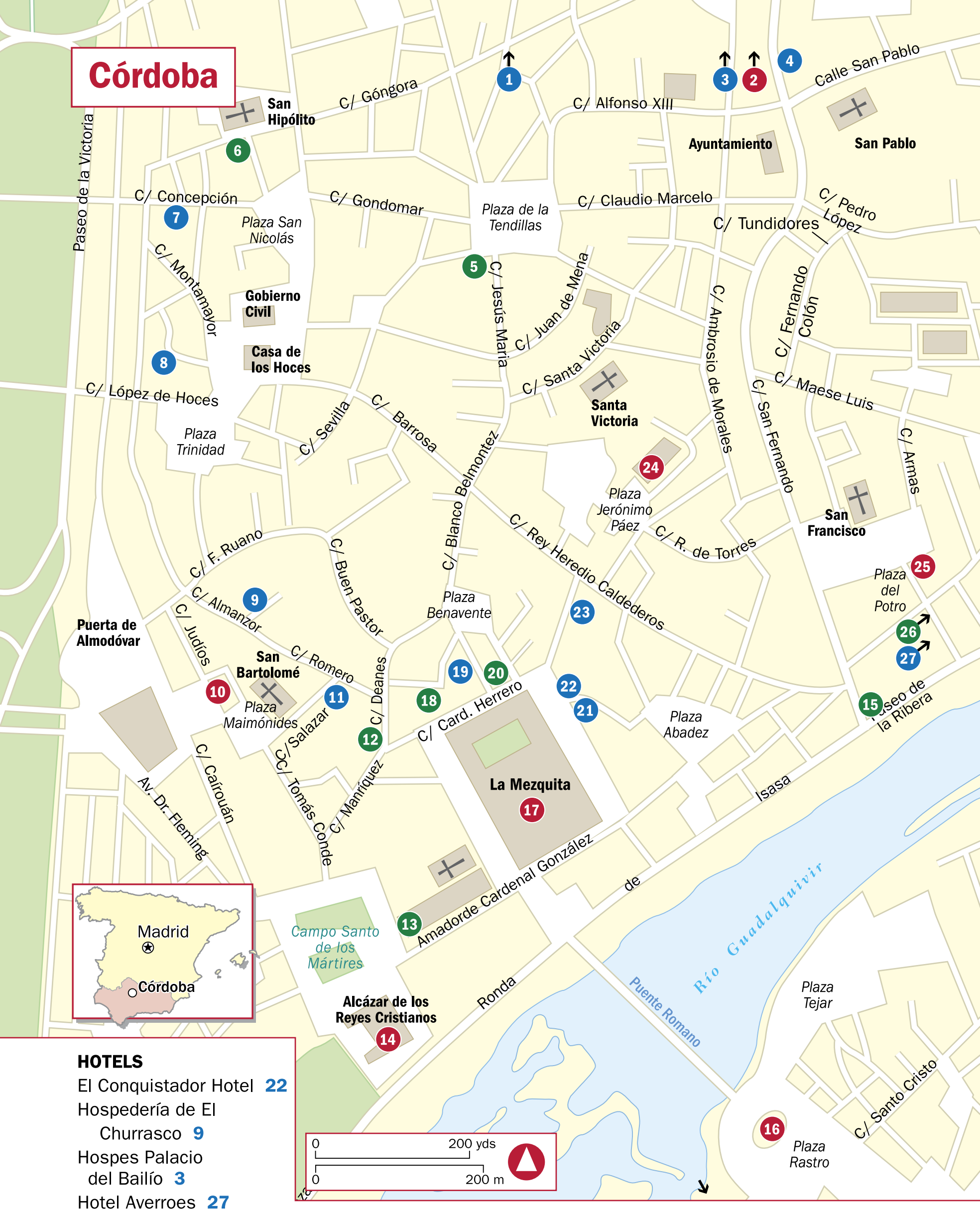
CÓRDOBA ★★★

105km (65 miles) W of Jaén, 419km (260 miles) SW of Madrid

Ten centuries ago, Córdoba was among the world's great cities. The capital of Muslim Spain, it was Europe's largest city and a cultural and intellectual center where scholars from around the known world came to rediscover classics that had been lost in Europe's Dark Ages and puzzle over the Arabic mathematics of algebra. It flourished with public baths, mosques, a great library, and palaces. Once Córdoba fell into Christian hands, the city was looted for its artistic treasures and much of its architecture was dismantled. Yet Córdoba persevered, retaining enough traces of its former glory to rival Sevilla and Granada.

Today this provincial capital is known chiefly for its mosque, but it abounds with other artistic and architectural riches, especially its lovely homes. The old Arab and Jewish quarters—the Judería—are famous for their narrow streets lined with whitewashed houses boasting flower-filled patios and balconies. It's perfectly acceptable to walk along, gazing into the courtyards. This isn't an invasion of privacy: The citizens of Córdoba take pride in showing off their patios as

Córdoba


San Hipólito
C/ Góngora
1
C/ Alfonso XIII
3
2
4
Calle San Pablo
San Pablo
Ayuntamiento
6
Paseo de la Victoria
C/ Concepción
7
Plaza San Nicolás
C/ Gondomar
Plaza de la Tendillas
C/ Claudio Marcelo
C/ Tundidores
C/ Pedro López
C/ Montamayor
Gobierno Civil
5
C/ Jesús María
C/ Juan de Mena
C/ Ambrosio de Morales
C/ Fernando Colón
Casa de los Hoces
8
C/ López de Hoces
C/ Santa Victoria
Santa Victoria
C/ Maese Luis
C/ San Fernando
C/ Armas
C/ Sevilla
C/ Barrosa
Plaza Trinidad
C/ Blanco Belmontez
24
Plaza Jerónimo Páez
San Francisco
C/ R. de Torres
C/ F. Ruano
C/ Buen Pastor
C/ Rey Heredia Caldederos
25
Plaza del Potro
C/ Almanzor
9
Plaza Benavente
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C/ Romero
C/ Deanes
19
20
10
Plaza Maimónides
11
18
22
C/ Card. Herrero
21
Plaza Abadez
15
Paseo de la Ribera
C/ Salazar
12
C/ Cairouán
C/ Tomás Conde
C/ Manríquez
La Mezquita
17
Isasa
Av. Dr. Fleming
Amadorde Cardenal González
de
Madrid
Córdoba
Campo Santo de los Mártires
13
Río Guadalquivir
Puente Romano
Ronda
Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos
14
Plaza Tejar
C/ Santo Cristo
16
Plaza Rastro
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part of the city's tradition. Don't forget to bring a good pair of walking shoes, as the only way to explore the heart of the city is on foot. You can hit the highlights in a long day, but Córdoba deserves the attention that comes from staying for a few days, if only experience to the magnificent timelessness of the Judería just after dawn, when you can hear the echoing step of every sandal-clad foot in the narrow streets.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The train is the most convenient and most popular means of transport to Córdoba, because the city is a rail junction for routes to the rest of Andalucía and is on the vital rail link between Madrid and Sevilla. The most used line is the **AVE high-speed train** racing between Madrid and Córdoba or between Córdoba and Sevilla. In the Spain of today, train travel between Sevilla and Córdoba has been cut to just 25 minutes. That's why travelers on the most rushed of schedules visit Córdoba on a day trip while still based in Sevilla. Amazingly, the AVE train ride between Madrid in the north and Córdoba in the south takes just 1½ hours. There are much slower trains, but because vacation time is precious we don't recommend them.

There are between 22 and 31 trains per day arriving from Madrid, costing 68€ for a one-way ticket. A one-way ticket between Córdoba and Sevilla on the AVE sells for 33€, but the slower train (80 min.) costs only 11€ and runs six times a day. If you're on the Costa del Sol and want to visit Córdoba, you can take one of the 10 to 12 trains per day from Málaga. Depending on the train, the trip takes 2 to 3 hours and costs from 21€ to 38€ for a one-way ticket.

The main train station at Córdoba is on the town's northern periphery, at Glorieta de las Tres Culturas, off Avenida de América. Bus no. 3 runs between the rail station and the historic core of the city. For rail information, call ✆ **90-242-22-42;** for AVE schedules or information call ✆ **90-242-22-42.** The RENFE advance-ticket office in Córdoba is at Ronda de los Tejares 10 (www.renfe.es; ✆ **95-747-58-84**). To reach the heart of the city from the station, head south on Avenida de Cervantes or Avenida del Gran Capitán.

Getting to this old Moorish city by **bus** is easier than ever now that **Alsa** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **95-740-40-40**) has taken over many smaller companies and improved service. Buses now arrive at the city's new bus station, behind the train depot on Glorieta de las Tres Culturas. The most popular routes are between Córdoba and Sevilla, with seven buses per day. The trip takes 2 hours and costs 12€ for a one-way ticket. Another popular run is between Granada and Córdoba, where eight to nine buses per day make the 3-hour run, costing 13€ for a one-way ticket.

The second-most-used terminal is operated by **Transportes Ureña** (✆ **95-322-01-16**). Its buses arrive at the terminal on Av. de Cervantes 22, a few blocks south of the train station. If you're visiting Jaén (p. 289), you'll find a bus connection between that city and Córdoba. The trip takes 2 hours; there are seven to eight buses per day, and the cost of a one-way ticket is 11€.

If you're on the tightest of budgets, call **Secorbus** (www.socibus.es; ✆ **90-222-92-92**), which offers the least expensive bus runs between

Madrid and Córdoba. The trip takes 4½ hours. There are about seven buses a day making this long haul, a one-way ticket going for 16€.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Calle Torrijos 10 (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-735-51-79**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

Exploring Córdoba

Among Córdoba's many sights is the **Puente Romano (Roman Bridge)** ★, dating from the time of Augustus and crossing the Guadalquivir River about 1 block south of the Mezquita. It is Roman in form only, as all 16 supporting arches have been replaced at one time or another in the last 2,000 years. Sculptor Bernabé Gómez del Río erected a statue of San Raphael in the middle of the bridge in 1651, and it is a favorite spot for romantic poses.

Plaza de Toros ★, on Gran Vía del Parque, stages its major bullfights in May, although fights are also presented at other times of the year. Córdoba is famed for its bullfighting history and was home to many famous matadors. Watch for local announcements. Most hotels will arrange tickets for you, ranging in price (in general) from 20€ to 115€. Call ✆ **95-723-25-07** for information.

Chances are, however, that you will spend most of your time in Córdoba within the medieval walled city with its narrow, winding streets. Buildings are so old and have so many layers of whitewash that few of them have a single sharp corner remaining. This area is known as the **Judería,** although it was, in fact, home to Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike for several hundred years.

Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos ★ ☺ PALACE Commissioned in 1328 by Alfonso XI, the Alcázar of the Christian Kings is a fine example of military

The Puente Romano, or Roman Bridge, of Córdoba.

architecture. Fernando and Isabel governed Spain from this fortress on the river as they prepared to reconquer Granada, the last Moorish stronghold in Spain. Columbus journeyed here to fill Isabel's ears with his plans for discovery. The ramparts still stir the imaginations of young visitors, although it is wise to restrain your children from running lest they be ejected by the guards.

Two blocks southwest of the Mezquita (see below), this quadrangular building is notable for powerful walls and a trio of towers—the Tower of the Lions, the Tower of Allegiance, and the Tower of the River. The Tower of the Lions contains intricately decorated ogival ceilings that are the most notable example of Gothic architecture in Andalucía. The beautiful **gardens** and Arabic baths (a holdover from an earlier Moorish fortress) are celebrated attractions. The Patio Morisco is another lovely spot, its pavement decorated with the arms of León and Castilla. A Roman sarcophagus is representative of 2nd- and 3rd-century funeral art, and the Roman mosaics are outstanding—especially a unique piece dedicated to Polyphemus and Galatea.

Caballerizas Reales. ☎ **95-742-01-51.** Admission 4€ adults (2€ for gardens), 2€ for students (1€ for gardens), free for children 14 and under with parent. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4:30–6:30pm; Sun 9:30am–2:30pm. Gardens illuminated July–Sept 10pm–midnight. Bus: 3 or 12.

Mezquita Catedral de Córdoba ★★★ MOSQUE From the 8th to 11th centuries, the Mezquita was the crowning architectural achievement of western Islam. It's a fantastic forest of arches painted with alternating red and white stripes—a realization in stone of a billowing desert tent. A Roman Catholic cathedral interrupts the vistas, as it sits awkwardly in the middle of the mosque as an enduring symbol of Christian hubris. The 16th-century cathedral may have been architectural sacrilege, but it does have an intricately carved ceiling and baroque choir stalls. One of the interesting features of the mosque is the **mihrab ★★**, a domed shrine of Byzantine mosaics that once housed the Qu'ran. After exploring the interior, stroll through the **Patio de los Naranjos** (Courtyard of the Orange Trees), which has a beautiful fountain where worshippers performed their ablutions before prayer and tourists rest their weary feet. The hardy can climb a 16th-century tower to catch a panoramic view of Córdoba and its environs.

INSIDE THE blooming patios

The middle of May is not the time to visit Córdoba for the climate (it's already scorching hot), but it is the season for getting to meet Córdobans inside their homes. They are so proud of the flowers that they grow in their patios that every year many of them open to visitors for the **Concurso Popular de Patios Cordobeses,** or **Córdoba Patio Festival** (www.amigosdelospatioscordobeses.es). Pick up a map of participants from the tourist office. When you enter people's homes, you will see their ancient patios arranged around a well or fountain and see the whitewashed walls hung with pots of blazing geraniums, or *gitanillas* ("little Gypsies"). Admission is free but it's customary to leave a few coins in a tip tray to help with upkeep.

The Mezquita, as seen from afar.

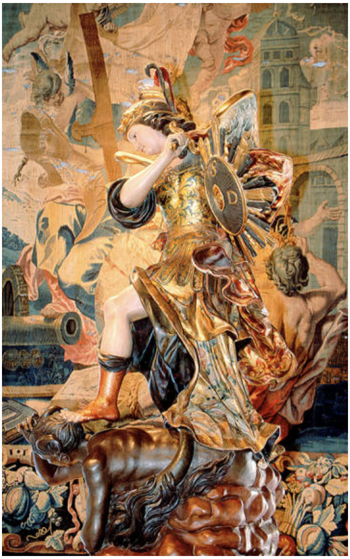
Calles Torrijos and Cardenal Herrero s/n (south of the train station, just north of the Roman bridge). www.mezquitadecordoba.org. ✆ **95-822-52-45.** Admission 8€ adults, 4€ children 13 and under. Mon–Sat 8:30am–6pm; Sun 8:30–10:15am and 2–6pm. Bus: 3.

Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba ★ 🏷 MUSEUM Córdoba's archaeological museum, 2 blocks northeast of the Mezquita, is one of the most important in Spain. Housed in a palace dating from 1505, it displays artifacts of the various peoples and conquerors who swept through the province. There are Paleolithic and Neolithic items; Iberian hand weapons and ceramics; and Roman sculptures, bronzes, ceramics, inscriptions, and mosaics. Córdoba also has one of the strongest collections of Visigothic artifacts in the country. Unsurprisingly, the museum is strongest in Arabic art and artifacts from the 8th through the 14th centuries. Take a few minutes to relax in one of the patios with its fountains and ponds. Right next door to the museum you can view the ruins of a Roman theater, which was discovered only in 2000.

Plaza Jerónimo Páez 7, Judería. www.museosdeandalucia.es. ✆ **95-735-55-17.** Admission 1.50€. Tues 2:30–8:30pm; Wed–Sat 9am–8:30pm; Sun and public holidays 9am–2:30pm. Bus: 3.

Museo de Bellas Artes de Córdoba ART MUSEUM A charming regional art museum with six exhibition halls arranged on three levels, this museum focuses on Córdoban painting from the 14th through the 20th centuries. Salon II features the school of Cordoban primitives—provincial painters working in a late Gothic style well into the 1600s. Among the strongest holdings are the often macabre works of mannerist painter Juan de Valdés-Leal, including his famous ***Virgin of the Silversmiths.*** The father-son pair of romantic 19th-century painters, Rafael Romero Barro and Rafael Romero de Torres, are well represented with images of matadors, bullfights, and other folkloric subjects. Of the same family, Julio Romero de Torres has a number of canvases depicting unimaginably busty nudes. The 20th-century hall is dominated by the sculptor Mateo Inurria Lainosa, a profound naturalist who dealt largely in religious iconography.

Plaza del Potro 1. www.museosdeandalucia.es. ☎ **95-735-55-50.** Admission 1.50€. Tues 2:30–8:30pm; Wed–Sat 9am–8:30pm; Sun 9am–2:30pm. Bus: 3 or 7.



Saint Michael Killing the Dragon, at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Córdoba.

Palacio Museo de Viana 🎁 HISTORIC HOME Few of Córdoba's palaces ever open to the public, but this one just outside the Judería is an exception. Visitors are shown into a carriage house, where the elegant vehicles of another era are displayed. Note the intricate leather decoration on the carriages and the leather wall hangings, some of which are even older than the carriages. Leatherwork has a long artisanal history in Córdoba, and the museum even has a collection of leather paintings. The interior is of most interest to fans of the decorative arts, but everyone can enjoy the sumptuous **garden and patios** ★★. These patios, 14 in all, are particularly stunning and will give you an idea of the interiors of traditional homes if you miss the Córdoba Patio Festival (see above). The palace is 4 blocks southeast of the Plaza de Colón, on the northeastern edge of the Old Quarter.

Plaza de Don Gome 2. ☎ **95-749-67-41.** Palace admission 6€; patios 3€. Oct–May Mon–Fri 10am–1pm and 4–6pm, Sat 10am–1pm; June 16–Sept Mon–Sat 9am–2pm. Bus: 1.

Sinagoga SYNAGOGUE In Córdoba, you'll find one of Spain's three remaining pre-Inquisition synagogues, built in 1315 in the Barrio de la Judería (Jewish Quarter), 2 blocks west of the northern wall of the Mezquita (p. 278). The synagogue is noted particularly for its stuccowork; the east wall contains a large orifice where the tabernacle was once placed (inside, the scrolls of the Pentateuch were kept). Note the various adornments of *mozárabe* patterns and Hebrew inscriptions. You can still see the balcony where women were sequestered during worship. After the Jews were expelled from Spain, the synagogue was turned into a hospital, until it became a Catholic chapel in 1588.

Calle de los Judíos 20. ☎ **95-720-29-28.** Admission .50€. Tues–Sat 9:30am–2pm and 3:30–5:30pm; Sun 9:30am–1:30pm. Bus: 3.

Torre de la Calahorra MUSEUM The Tower of Calahorra is across the river at the southern end of the Roman bridge. Commissioned by Enrique II of Trastamara, in 1369, to protect him from his brother, Pedro I, it now houses a town museum, **Museo Vivo de al-Andalus.** Here visitors can take a self-guided tour (in English or Spanish) with headsets. One room holds wax figures of Córdoba's famous philosophers, including Maimonides. Other rooms exhibit a miniature model of the Alhambra at Granada, complete with water fountains, a miniature Mezquita, and a display of Arab musical instruments. You can climb to the

A Caliph's Pleasure Palace: The Moorish Versailles

Conjunto Arqueológico Madinat al-Zahra, a kind of Moorish Versailles just outside Córdoba, was constructed in the 10th century by the first caliph of al-Andalus, Abd ar-Rahman III. He named it after the favorite of his harem, nicknamed "the Brilliant." Thousands of workers and animals slaved to build this mammoth pleasure palace, said to have contained 300 baths and 400 houses. Over the following years the site was plundered for building materials; in fact, it might have been viewed as a quarry for the entire region. Some of its materials, so it's claimed, went to build the Alcázar in Sevilla. The Royal House, rendezvous point for the ministers, has been reconstructed. The principal salon remains in fragments, though, so you have to imagine it in its majesty. Just beyond the Royal House are the ruins of a mosque constructed to face Mecca. The Berbers sacked the palace in 1013 when the Umayyad dynasty briefly took control of al-Andalus.

The palace is at Carretera Palma de Río, Km 8 (www.museosdeandalucia.es; ✆ **95-735-28-74**). Admission is 1.50€. From May to September 15, hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 8:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm; September 16 to April, hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 6:30pm. Buses leave from Avenida del Alcázar and Paseo de la Victoria (✆ **95-735-51-79**).

top of the tower for panoramic views of the Roman bridge, the river, and the cathedral/mosque.

Av. de la Confederación, Puente Romano. www.torrecalahorra.com. ✆ **95-729-39-29.** Admission to museum 4.50€ adults, 3€ students and children 7 and under. Admission to Multivisión 1.20€. May–Sept daily 10am–2pm and 4:30–8:30pm; Oct–Apr daily 10am–6pm. Tours daily 11am, noon, 3, and 4pm. Bus: 16.

Where to Eat

Córdoban cuisine probably draws more extensively on Arabic and North African cooking than anywhere else in Spain. Not only does it liberally mix sweet flavors into savory dishes, but you'll find a lot of dried fruits and nuts and such spices as cumin, turmeric, and cinnamon. Lamb and kid are usually the meats of choice, although many menus feature beef, a side effect of the local bull breeding industry. It wouldn't be Spain without a strong complement of pork and shellfish—dishes forbidden by Jewish and Muslim dietary laws.

EXPENSIVE

Bodegas Campos ★ SPANISH/ANDALUCÍAN You'll eat one of your best meals in Córdoba at this local favorite, located on a narrow cobblestone street in a residential neighborhood 10 minutes from the Mezquita. The front of the restaurant has one of Córdoba's hippest and most crowded tapas bars. It's filled with attractive singles—some more interested in the scene than the food. Bodegas Campos has a welcoming rustic atmosphere and has been going strong since 1908 as both a wine cellar (bodega) and a tavern. Typical fare would include a salad of salt cod and thinly sliced oranges on lettuce dressed only with olive oil and salt, or tiny fried fish served with thick Andalucían *salmorejo* sauce (a tomato-bread purée). Other specialties include roasted partridge with vegetables in a vinegar sauce and a casserole of braised Iberian pig's cheek.

Calle de los Lineros 32. www.bodegascampos.com. ☎ **95-749-75-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–28€. DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–midnight; Sun 11am–5pm. Closed Dec 25 and 31. Bus: 1, 3, 4, or 7.

El Burlaero ★ MEDITERRANEAN/ANDALUCÍAN Named in the local dialect for the barrier that protects a bullfighter from the bull, El Burlaero celebrates the cuisine of the Córdoban countryside with a strong emphasis on grilled meats. The lamb chops are succulent and redolent of the wild rosemary that grows in the hills. The beef kabobs are somewhat tougher, but more strongly flavored than American or British beef. If you can't make up your mind (there are also terrific game casseroles), settle for the mixed grill and get a piece or two of everything. Set in a 16th-century house that belonged to the first bishops of Córdoba, this restaurant is in the heart of the Judería. The *mesón* offers seven dining areas, along with balconies and a central patio adorned with antique-style murals.

Calle de la Hoguera 5. www.restauranteelburlaero.com. ☎ **95-747-27-19.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–18€; set menus 13€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 3.

La Almudaina ★★ ANDALUCÍAN/CONTINENTAL The owners of this historic restaurant near the Alcázar deserve as much credit for their renovations of a decrepit 15th-century palace as they do for the excellent cuisine produced in their bustling kitchen. Set into the ancient city walls at the gate closest to the Alcázar, La Almudaina is serene and lovely. You can dine in one of the lace-curtained salons or on a glass-roofed central courtyard. The menu has two tracks, so to speak: Many of the dishes are almost medieval in their origins, like the Cordoban version of *salmorejo* (a thick cold soup made with bread, tomato, fresh garlic, Iberian ham, and olive oil) or the white gazpacho redolent of garlic and ground almonds. The other track is Continental classic—Escoffier with a Spanish accent. If you're visiting during the late fall when black truffles are available, try the pork tenderloin in truffle sauce. One of the favorite desserts is Córdoban quince pastry prepared according to a 19th-century recipe.

Plaza Campos de los Santos Mártires 1. www.restaurantealmudaina.com. ☎ **95-747-43-42.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–35€; set menus 12€–75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sun 12:30–4pm. Closed Sun July 15–Sept 1. Bus: 3 or 16.

MODERATE

El Blasón 🏷 ANDALUCÍAN The tab, with wine, rarely exceeds 30€ at El Blasón, a restaurant in a relatively modern building near the Gran Teatro in the new city. You'll dine in any of four separate rooms, each evoking the mid–19th century, thanks to formal crystal chandeliers and a scattering of antiques. Especially appealing is an enclosed patio where ivy creeps up walls and the noises from the city outside are muffled. The cuisine is imaginative—and described on the menu in purple prose: "salmon with oranges from the mosque," for example, or "goose thigh in fruited wine." Braised oxtail (*rabo de toro*) is always a good bet, as are any of the roasted lamb dishes redolent with the scent of olive oil and rosemary.

José Zorrilla 11. ☎ **95-748-06-25.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–20€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4pm and 8–11:30pm. Closed in July. Bus: 3.

El Caballo Rojo ★★ SPANISH Within walking distance of the Mezquita in the Old Town, this restaurant is one of the most popular in Andalucía, and—with the exception of La Almudaina (see above)—the best in Córdoba. The place has a noise level no other restaurant here matches, but the skilled waiters manage to cope with all demands. Stop in the restaurant's popular bar for a predinner drink, and then take the iron-railed stairs to the upper dining room, where a typical meal might include gazpacho, a main dish of chicken, and then ice cream (often homemade pistachio) and sangria. The Red Head serves the classic Córdoban version of gazpacho, a dish that predates the introduction of tomatoes and peppers from the New World. Here the almond-milk broth is thickened with bread, and it enrobes pieces of apple cut in a small dice. The chef also offers Sephardic and Mozarabic specialties, such as monkfish in a tagine of pine nuts, currants, carrots, and cream.

Cardinal Herrero 28, Plaza de la Hoguera. www.elcaballorojo.com. ☎ **95-747-53-75.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–26€; fixed-price menu 26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4:30pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 2.

Paseo de la Ribera ANDALUCÍAN Established in 1999 near the riverfront east of the Old City, this popular choice is known for affordable food and a reasonably priced wine list. Fish lovers not too particular about eating local will enjoy the perfectly prepared swordfish with prawn sauce, though the hearty, flavorful rice with baby squid is a more Andalucían dish. Meat eaters will find flavorful beef ribs, pork tenderloin with three sauces, and well-seasoned grilled steak. The grottolike decor, with walls covered in plaster, and chairs and tables set on wooden floors, is evocative of a Roman cave.

Plaza Cruz del Rastro 3. ☎ **95-747-15-30.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 10€–20€; fixed-price menus 13€–39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Bus: 3.

Taberna Casa Pepe de la Judería ★ CORDOVAN Around the corner from the mosque, this taberna is often dismissed as a tourist trap, yet it serves good, authentic Andalucían fare with a strong emphasis on simple grilled meats. Several small rooms decorated with flamboyant tiles and filled with heavy wooden furniture are spread over three floors. From May to October, tables are placed on the rooftop where chicken, pork, and cuts of beef are grilled over charcoal and an Andalucían guitarist entertains. Traditional starters here would include crisply fried red mullet, pickled anchovies, or either the Córdoban white gazpacho or the Sevillan tomato gazpacho. Roasted fish dishes (especially yellowfin tuna) are often prepared in a North African style with raisins and pine nuts, while the slow-roasted leg of lamb is smothered in sweet peppers, onion, garlic, and rosemary.

Calle Romero 1. www.casapepejuderia.com. ☎ **95-720-07-44.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–15€; fixed-price menu 23€ (Mon–Fri). AE, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 1–4:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Fri–Sat 1–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Bus: 3.

INEXPENSIVE

Café Siena 🏷 SPANISH The layout of Córdoba makes it far too easy to get enmeshed in the medieval neighborhood around the Mezquita, and not venture anywhere else. This big, angular, and *moderno* cafe is the most appealing of those that ring the centerpiece of Córdoba's 19th- and early-20th-century commercial core, the Plaza de las Tendillas. In nice weather, most diners and drinkers opt for an outdoor table on the square. As day turns to evening, the clientele morphs from shoppers and local office workers to night owls. The food is fairly standard, a litany of the country's favorite dishes, but you can't go wrong with a *tortilla española* (potato omelet) or a *plato combinado* that includes a salty little beef or pork steak, with or without the extra fried eggs.

Plaza de las Tendillas s/n. ✆ **95-747-30-05.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 8€–16€; *menú del día* 14€; tapas 3€–9€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–2am. Bus: 1, 3, 4, or 7.

Shopping

From Moorish times through the Renaissance, Córdoba was famous for its leather workers. Highly valued in 15th-century Europe, the leather was studded with gold and silver ornaments, and then embossed with designs (*guadamaci*). Large panels of it often served in lieu of tapestries. Today the industry has fallen into decline, and the market is filled mostly with cheap imitations. You might want to seek out the following shop, especially if you're interested in Córdoban handicrafts: **Artesanía Andaluza,** Tomás Conde 3 (no phone), features a vast array of handicrafts, especially filigreed silver from the mines of Sierra Morena, and some excellently crafted embossed leather, a holdover from the Muslim heyday. Lots of junk is mixed in with the good stuff, though, so beware. The shop is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm.

Córdoba has a branch of Spain's major department store, **El Corte Inglés,** at Ronda de los Tejares 30 (www.elcorteingles.es; ✆ **95-722-28-81**), in the new city. Some of the staff speak English. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 9pm.

Arte Zoco, Calle de los Judíos s/n (✆ **95-729-05-75**), is the largest association of craftspeople in Córdoba. Established in the Judería in the mid-1980s, the site has stalls where about a dozen artisans sell their leather, wood, silver, crystal, terra cotta, and iron wares. About a half-dozen of them maintain their studios on the premises, so you can visit and check out their techniques and tools. You'll find everything from avant-garde designs to pieces that honor centuries-old traditions. Of special interest is the revival of the Califar pottery first introduced to Córdoba during the regimes of the Muslim caliphs. The shop is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 2pm. The artisans' workshops and studios open and close according to the whims of their occupants, but are usually maintained Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm and 5:30 to 8pm.

Alejandro and Carlos López Obrero run **Taller Meryan,** Calleja de Las Flores 2 (www.meryancor.com; ✆ **95-747-59-02**), on one of the most colorful streets in the city. In this 250-year-old building you can see artisans plying their crafts. Although most items must be custom-ordered, some ready-made pieces are for sale, including cigarette boxes, jewel cases, attaché cases, book and folio covers, and ottoman covers. Hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 2pm.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Nighttime fun in the oldest part of Córdoba usually means visiting several tapas bars surrounding the Mezquita. Foremost among them is **Casa Pepe de la Judería,** Calle Romero 1 (www.casapepejuderia.com; ✆ **95-720-07-44**), an atmospheric old hideaway in an antique building where many generations have lifted a glass.

Nearby is **Casa Salinas,** Puerta de Almodóvar s/n (✆ **95-729-08-46**), offering glasses of sherry and plates of tapas. The bar **El Juramento,** Calle Juramento 6 (✆ **95-748-54-77**), is old-fashioned enough to be cozy and crowded enough to be convivial. **Bar Círculo Taurino,** Calle Manuel María Arjona 1 (✆ **95-747-19-53**), is small, cramped, and loaded with memorabilia from bullfights past; it's near the Plaza Colón.

Push back a thick curtain to enter dimly lit **Casa Rubio,** Puerta de Almodóvar 5 (✆ **95-742-08-53**), where you'll get a gruff but accommodating welcome either at the rectangular bar or in one of a pair of rooms partially covered with Andalucían tiles. The leafy inner courtyard has iron tables and a handful of chairs that wobble only slightly on the uneven flooring.

The city's most popular flamenco *tablao* is **Mesón Flamenco La Bulería,** Pedro López 3 (✆ **95-748-38-39**), close to the Plaza de la Corredera on the outskirts of the old part of town. This show is reasonably priced if touristic, with the 15€ cover supplying your first drink. Most shows start nightly around 10:30pm. The club is generally closed from December to February. For more formal entertainment, check out the listings at the city's theatrical grande dame, the early 1900s **Gran Teatro de Córdoba,** Av. Gran Capitán 3 (www.teatrocordoba.com; ✆ **95-748-02-37**), site of most of the ballet, opera, chamber music, and symphony performances in town.

Where to Stay

At the peak of its summer season, Córdoba has too few hotels to meet the demand, so reserve as far in advance as possible.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hospes Palacio Del Bailío ★★ This exquisite boutique hotel built in the new city atop remains of Roman baths is about 15 to 20 minutes away from the Judería if you're walking. But it's worth the extra trouble since it brings luxurious contemporary furnishings and appointments to the original 16th-century palace. Design (modern and old), history, space, and light seem harmonious here. Everything from yesterday was incorporated into this new ensemble, including stables, coach houses, lofts, granaries, traces of an older Roman house, original paintings, and a splendid Moorish-style garden. Each unit is unique, including some that open onto a view of the hotel's patios. From velvet to leather, all the pure materials used in the design are in natural colors. Some of the rooms are graced with mural paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries. Ask about a room with a private balcony.

Ramírez de las Casas Deza 10–12, 14010 Córdoba. www.hospes.com. ✆ **95-749-89-93.** Fax 95-749-89-94. 53 units. 130€–288€ double; 212€–336€ junior suite; 410€–600€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Bus: 5, 10, 11, or 13. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

EXPENSIVE

Macià Alfaros ★ Just around the corner for the Hospes Palacio del Bailío, this five-story modern hotel stands the same brisk hike away from the Judería. The hotel has a vaguely Moorish caste but it was clearly built for auto travelers, since the main entrance is through the garage area—hardly an attractive welcome. But the hotel improves considerably once you're inside, starting with a nice big swimming pool in the central courtyard. Bedrooms are small by luxury travel standards but more than adequate since they have good built-in storage and furnishings. Public areas make reference to old Andalucían style, with carved capitals on columns, extensive tile work, and similar decorative touches throughout the central courtyard.

Alfaros 18, 14001 Córdoba. www.maciahoteles.com. ✆ **95-749-19-20.** Fax 95-749-22-10. 131 units. 60€–208€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Córdoba ★ 🏷 Found inconveniently 4km (2½ miles) outside town in a suburb called El Brillante, this *parador* offers the amenities and facilities of a luxurious resort hotel at reasonable rates. The distance can be covered quickly on a local bus or by an inexpensive taxi, making the isolation less of a problem. Consisting of new construction on the site of a former caliphate palace, the *parador* features a garden, Los Naranjos (the Orange Trees), where the first palm trees planted in Europe can be found. The spacious guest rooms have been furnished with fine dark-wood pieces, and some have balconies for eating breakfast or relaxing over a drink. The dining room offers two classic Andalucían soups, both served cold. Try either *salmorejo cordobés* (vegetable soup) or *gazpacho blanco de almendras* (almond soup). To follow, try the delectable steak in green sauce.

Av. de la Arruzafa 33, 14012 Córdoba. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-727-59-00.** Fax 95-728-04-09. 94 units. 80€–161€ double; 180€–230€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

El Conquistador Hotel ★ Built centuries ago as a private villa, this hotel—one of the most attractive in town—has been tastefully renovated. It sits opposite an unused rear entrance to the Mezquita and has triple rows of stone-trimmed windows and ornate iron balustrades. The marble-and-granite lobby opens onto an interior courtyard filled with seasonal flowers, a pair of splashing fountains, and a symmetrical stone arcade. The quality and comfort of the rooms—each with a black-and-white marble floor and a private bathroom—make the hotel a favorite with seasoned travelers, but the European-size rooms make it not as good a choice for travelers with lots of luggage.

Magistral González Francés 15, 14003 Córdoba. www.hotelconquistadorcordoba.com. ✆ **95-748-11-02.** Fax 95-747-46-77. 132 units. 70€–176€ double; from 99€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 3 or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hospedería de El Churrasco 🎁 In the heart of Córdoba, close to the narrow lanes of La Judería, this little inn is affiliated with El Churrasco, a well-known restaurant. The owner, Rafael Carrillo, combines his love of gastronomy and good hospitality with these two enterprises, the inn being his latest creation. The midsize, well-furnished bedrooms, each named after a Spanish artist, are decorated with Andalucían furniture and antiques. Most rooms have a "matrimonial" (double) bed, but twins are available in the superior units. On the terrace/solarium, vistas of the Mezquita unfold.

Calle Romero 38, 14003 Córdoba. www.elchurrasco.com. ✆ **95-729-48-08.** Fax 95-742-16-61. 9 units. 140€–200€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 21€. Bus: 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Lola Hotel ★ If you're looking for a small and intimate boutique hotel in the shadow of the Mezquita, this is as good as it gets. The most surprising thing about this modern hotel is that it's here at all, set behind the thick masonry walls of what was originally a private home. You'll register, relax, chat with your fellow guests, eat breakfast, and order drinks from the bar—all within the same cramped but convivial area: a small but cozy courtyard ringed with stone columns and open to the skies above Córdoba. At the touch of a button, an electric motor pulls a plastic canopy over the opening to shelter the furnishings from the cold and rain. Bedrooms inside are larger, more plush, and with more opulent bathrooms—with gorgeous tile work—than you might have expected. Each bears a name popular for Muslim women during the 19th century: Aida, Aixa, Alzára, Jasmina, and Suleima.

Calle Romero 3, 14001 Córdoba. www.hotellola.es. ✆ **95-720-03-05.** Fax 95-720-02-18. 8 units. 83€–120€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Bus: 1, 3, or 7. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Amistad Córdoba ★★ In the heart of the Judería, a 4-minute walk from the mosque, this hotel is one of the most desirable in town. It opened in 1992 after renovations combined two existing 18th-century mansions situated next to a 1314 synagogue. The two houses of the hotel face each other and are linked by a small patio of beautiful Andalucían arches and colorful Spanish tiles. The spacious rooms come with neat bathrooms and excellent beds, and the design is a tasteful combination of wood and fabric. A more modern wing, added in 1998, has rooms that are equivalent in comfort.

Plaza de Maimónides 3, 14004 Córdoba. www.nh-hoteles.com. ✆ **95-742-03-35.** Fax 95-742-03-65. 84 units. 79€–163€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 2, 3, 5, or 6. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (18€ per 24 hr.).

NH Califa 🏷 Attracting a mainly Spanish clientele, this centrally located hotel, just outside the western wall of the Judería a block north of the Puerto de Almódovar, is a 10-minute walk from the Mezquita. Very businesslike and a bit austere, it's quite a good value and a good compromise between creature comforts and proximity to the principal attractions. It has russet-colored marble floors, flocked wall coverings, and a spacious lounge where the TV always seems to be turned to a football match—unless it's turned to a bullfight. The midsize rooms are reasonably comfortable and furnished in a functional modern style. Note that free parking is available along the street, but if you're fortunate enough to find a space, try to stay parked until you leave Córdoba.

Lope de Hoces 14, 14003 Córdoba. www.nh-hoteles.es. ✆ **95-729-94-00.** Fax 95-729-57-16. 65 units. 50€–137€ double; 172€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 32. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Averroes ★ Named for the great medieval Muslim scholar from Córdoba, this hotel links two ancient houses with an impressive patio decorated with wrought-iron work and filled with potted plants. With its characteristic tiled walls and classic arches, the patio is a social area with tables where you can relax after a day of sightseeing. The comfortable, medium-size rooms have marble floors, pastel walls, and European double beds (2m long/6½ ft. instead of 6 ft.) The bus that stops in front will take you to the modern town center in just 15 to 20 minutes—about the same time it takes to walk to the Mezquita.

Campo Madre de Dios 38, 14002 Córdoba. www.hotelaverroes.es. ✆ **95-743-59-78.** Fax 95-743-59-81. 79 units. 50€–103€ double; 65€–123€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Marisa 🏷 In front of the Mezquita, this modest hotel is one of the most centrally located in Córdoba, not to mention one of the city's best values. Completed in the early 1970s, ongoing renovations have kept it in good shape. Most recent improvements have been to the bathrooms, where the plumbing was renewed. The rooms are small but cozily comfortable—ask for one with a balcony overlooking either the statue of the Virgin of Rosales or the Patio de los Naranjos. The architecture and furnishings are in a generic Andalucían style.

Cardenal Herrero 6, 14003 Córdoba. ✆ **95-747-31-42.** Fax 95-747-41-44. 28 units. 65€–100€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 3 or 16. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C.

Hotel Mezquita 🏷 This hotel faces the east side of the Mezquita. It was constructed in 1998 by joining two old houses with a patio. The decor includes tastefully arranged antiques throughout. The architecture is typically Andalucían—arches, interior patios, and hand-painted tiles, along with old mirrors and chandeliers. The small but comfortable rooms are painted pastels to contrast with the dark-oak furnishings, and, unlike Córdoba's business hotels, the Mezquita doesn't gouge you to use Wi-Fi. Naturally, the rooms overlooking the Mezquita are the first to be booked.

Plaza Santa Catalina 1, 14003 Córdoba. www.hotelmezquita.com. ✆ **95-747-55-85.** Fax 95-747-62-19. 31 units. 44€–74€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking nearby 15€. Bus: 3 or 16. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Selu 🏷 Set in a commercial part of town close to the Paseo de la Victoria, this well-run and very professional choice is ideal for bargain hunters. If you plan to spend most of your time sightseeing and need a hotel only for sleep and rest, you'll find the Selu well maintained, its rooms modern and comfortable. Bedrooms are midsize for the most part and furnished with a few Andalucían decorations, with perhaps a mirrored wall here and there. The guest rooms are spread across three floors, and the location is about a 15-minute walk to the Judería and the Mesquita in one direction, or to the city center in another.

Eduardo Dato 7, 14003 Córdoba. www.hotelselu.com. ✆ **95-747-65-00.** Fax 95-747-83-76. 99 units. 50€–110€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (9€ per 24 hr.).

Los Omeyas ★ If you want to stay in the very heart of Córdoba, you can't find a better location than this hotel nestled in the Jewish Quarter. The name comes from the Umayyad dynasty that ruled the Muslim empire of al-Andalus. (The white marble and latticework, while modern, at least reference Arabic tradition.) The hotel receives natural light through a central colonnaded patio furnished with tables. Although in no way grand, rooms are comfortable, tasteful, and have modern bathrooms. Those on the top floor offer a panoramic view of the ancient tower of the mosque, which is literally around the corner.

Calle Encarnación 17, 14003 Córdoba. www.hotel-losomeyas.com. ☎ **95-749-22-67.** Fax 95-749-16-59. 33 units. 57€–80€ double; 72€–95€ triple; 87€–110€ quad. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 3 or 16. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

THE RENAISSANCE CITIES

Only a little more than an hour from Granada by car, the main cities of the province of Jaén could not be more different in demeanor or atmosphere. While Granada is the ultimate Moorish city, **Jaén** (the capital), **Baeza,** and **Úbeda** contain some of Spain's finest Renaissance architecture. The brilliant self-taught architect Andrés de Vandelvira studied the "new" style of Italy and remade these Andalucían cities in his own vernacular interpretation. It did not hurt that his patrons were flush with wealth from royal monopolies on the olive oil and wool trade granted by Carlos V (at the cost of a revolt among the nobles of Castilla). Long overlooked in the tourist industry, the Renaissance Cities were rediscovered in the 1960s when the Spanish government installed exquisite *paradores* in some of the most historic buildings in the region.

Jaén

97km (60 miles) E of Córdoba, 97km (60 miles) N of Granada, 338km (210 miles) S of Madrid

In the center of one of Spain's most important olive-growing districts, Jaén is sandwiched between Córdoba and Granada, and has always been a gateway between Castilla and Andalucía.

The old walls of Jaén.

Jaén's bustling modern section is of little interest to visitors, but the **Moorish Old Town,** where narrow cobblestone streets hug the mountainside, is reason enough to visit. A hilltop castle, now a first-rate *parador,* dominates the city. On a clear day you can see the snow-covered peaks of the Sierra Nevada.

The city of Jaén is the center of a large province of 13,491 sq. km (5,209 sq. miles) framed by mountains: the Sierra Morena to the north, the Segura and Cazorla ranges to the east, and those of Huelma, Noalejo, and Valdepeñas to the south. To the west, plains widen into the fertile Guadalquivir Valley. Jaén province comprises three well-defined districts: the Sierra de Cazorla, a land of wild scenery; the plains of Bailén, Ajona, and Arjonilla, filled with wheat fields, vineyards, and old olive trees; and the valleys of the tributaries of the Guadalquivir.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE If you're driving from Córdoba, the fastest route is via the E-5/A-4 to Andújar, where you can pick up the A-311 to Jaén. The drive time is about 1 hour and 40 minutes. You can also drive north from Granada along E-902, a distance of 93km (58 miles). If you're taking the **train** from Córdoba in the west, it takes only 1½ hours to reach Jaén from there. Four trains per day arrive from Córdoba, beginning at 9:40am daily and costing 13€ for a one-way ticket. There are four trains per day from Madrid, taking 4 to 5 hours and costing 32€ for a one-way ticket. Trains arrive in Jaén at the RENFE station on Paseo de la Estación (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), north of the center of town.

If you are coming north from Granada, **Alsa** runs 16 **buses** per day, taking 1½ hours and costing 7.80€ for a one-way ticket. Buses arrive in Jaén at Plaza Coca de la Piñera (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), a block south of Parque de la Victoria.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Calle Ramón y Cajal 4 (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-319-04-55**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

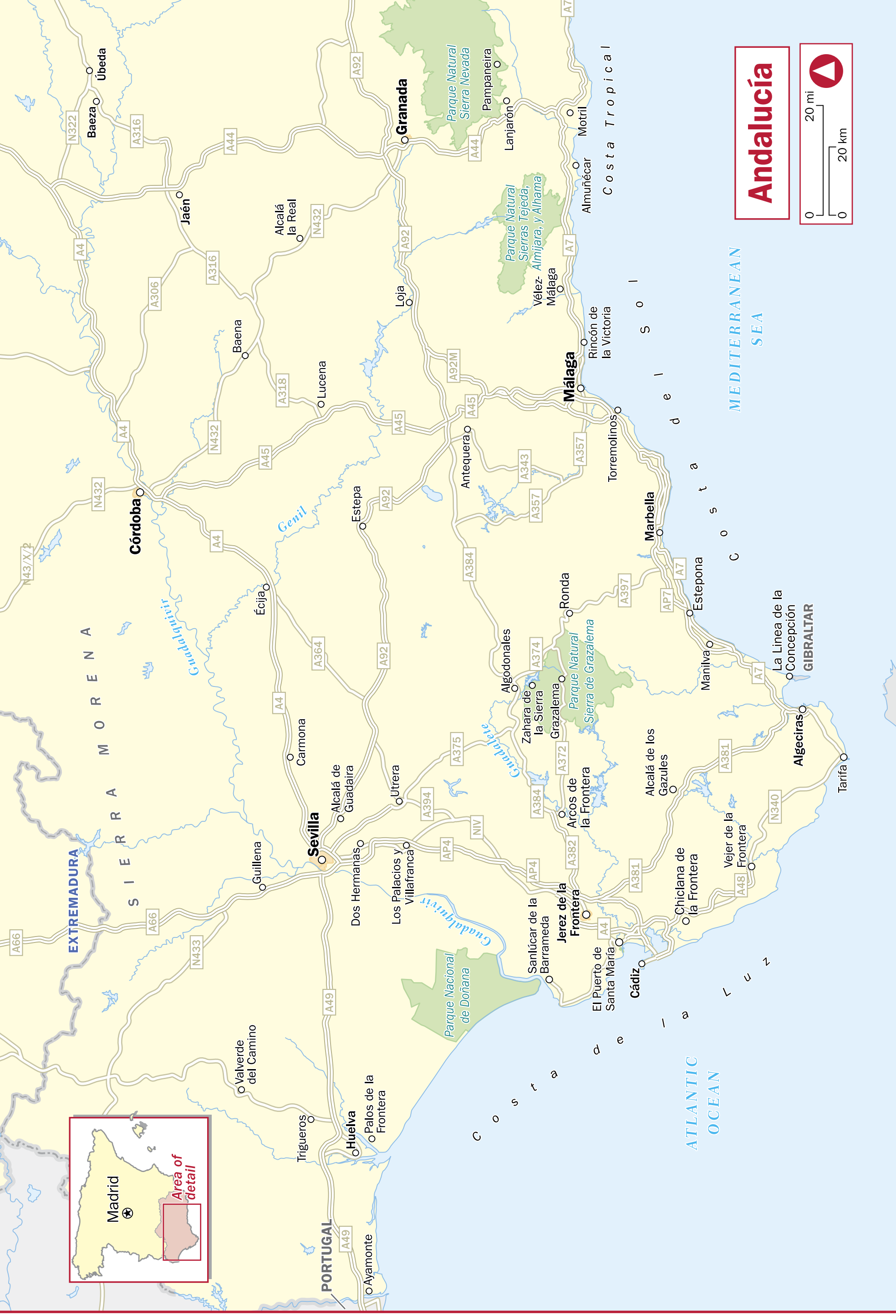
EXPLORING JAÉN

Catedral de Santa María ★ CATHEDRAL The formality and grandeur of Jaén's cathedral bears witness to the city's past importance. Begun in 1555 on the site of a former mosque and completed in 1802, it's a honey-colored blend of Gothic, baroque, and Renaissance styles, with an emphasis on the latter. The original architect was Andrés de Vandelvira (1509–75) and the finished cathedral largely follows his original design. A huge dome dominates the interior with its richly carved choir stalls. The **cathedral museum ★** contains an important collection of historical objects in two underground chambers, including **paintings by Jusepe de Ribera,** the baroque painter. Its most celebrated relic is the Santo Rostro (Holy Face). According to legend, this cloth was used by Veronica to wipe Jesus' face on his way to Calvary. Evocative of Italy's Shroud of Turin, the image of Christ is said to have imprinted on the fabric. The cathedral is southwest of the Plaza de la Constitución.

Plaza de Santa María. ✆ **95-323-42-33.** Free admission to cathedral; museum 3€. Cathedral daily 8:30am–1pm and 5–8pm (closes at 7pm in winter); museum Tues–Sat 9am–1pm and 5–8pm. Bus: 8, 10, or 16.

Centro Cultural Palacio de Villardompardo MUSEUM This is a three-in-one attraction, including some former Arab baths (known as *hamman*) and two museums, the Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares and the Museo Internacional de Arte Naif. Underneath the palace, near Calle San Juan and the Chapel of Saint Andrew (San Andrés), are the former **Arab baths ★**. They represent some of the most important Moorish architecture from the 11th century ever discovered in Spain. You can visit a warm room, a hot room, and a cold room—the last with a barrel vault and 12 star-shaped chandeliers.

The **Museo de Artes y Costumbres Populares** houses a collection of primarily 19th-century folkloric artifacts, including costumes, dolls, ceramics, and even photographs documenting former days in Andalucía. The **Museo Internacional de Arte Naif** contains a changing art exhibit featuring the work of artists from around the globe who have created professional, skilled paintings without any formal art instruction.


Andalucía
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S I E R R A M O R E N A
Costa Tropical
Costa del Sol
Costa de la Luz
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Madrid
Area of detail
Parque Natural Sierra Nevada
Parque Natural Sierras Tejeda, Almijara, y Alhama
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
Parque Nacional de Doñana
Guadalquivir
Genil
Guadalete
Úbeda
Baeza
Jaén
Granada
Pampaneira
Lanjarón
Motril
Almuñécar
Alcalá la Real
Loja
Vélez-Málaga
Rincón de la Victoria
Málaga
Torremolinos
Baena
Lucena
Córdoba
Antequera
Estepa
Écija
Marbella
Ronda
Estepona
Algodonales
Zahara de la Sierra
Grazalema
Manilva
La Línea de la Concepción
Algeciras
Tarifa
Carmona
Sevilla
Alcalá de Guadaira
Utrera
Dos Hermanas
Los Palacios y Villafranca
Guillena
Arcos de la Frontera
Alcalá de los Gazules
Jerez de la Frontera
Sanlúcar de la Barrameda
El Puerto de Santa María
Cádiz
Chiclana de la Frontera
Vejer de la Frontera
Valverde del Camino
Trigueros
Huelva
Palos de la Frontera
Ayamonte
A7
A92
A44
N322
A316
A4
A306
N432
A318
A45
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A397
AP7
A364
A374
A375
A372
A394
NIV
AP4
A382
A381
A48
N340
A66
N433
A49
N43/X2

Plaza de Santa Luisa de Marillac s/n. ✆ **95-324-80-68.** Free admission. Nov–Mar Tues–Fri 9:30am–8:30pm, Sat–Sun 9:30am–2:30pm; Apr–Oct Tues–Fri 9am–9:30pm, Sat–Sun 9:30am–2:30pm. You must go on foot: In the Old Quarter of Jaén, follow signs indicating either baños árabes or barrio de la magdalena. Bus: 8, 10, or 16.

Museo de Jaén MUSEUM Housed in a 1547 mansion and adjoining buildings long occupied by the Army, this important regional museum contains some of the country's finest artifacts representing the art and culture of the Iberians, the original settlers of the peninsula even before the arrival of Phoenicians in 1100 B.C. Long in the making, this museum fills a large gap in the province's archaeological treasures. More than 500 ancient Iberian settlements have been identified in Jaén province, and this provincial museum can exhibit only a fraction of these valuable artifacts at one time. But what it does show is choice, including sculpture and paintings of other art from the province of Jaén (for example, Pedro Berruguete's *Christ at the Column*). Look also for a paleo-Christian sarcophagus from Martos.

Paseo de la Estación 27. www.museosdeandalucia.es. ✆ **95-331-33-39.** Admission 1.50€ (free to E.U. citizens). Tues 2:30–8:30pm; Wed–Sat 9am–8:30pm; Sun 9am–2:30pm. Bus: 8, 10, or 16.

WHERE TO EAT

Consider having a meal in the luxurious hilltop *parador* (see below), which commands views of Jaén. It's one of the loveliest spots in the area.

Casa Antonio ★ ANDALUCÍAN The setting here is traditional, and while some of the food—like roast suckling pig with baked potatoes—could have been on the menu a century ago, many of the dishes are imaginative takes on Andalucían tradition. Consider, for example, the "hamburger" of mixed pig's feet and squid tentacles or the roasted mutton chops with a mushroom aioli. For a treat usually found only on the Costa de la Luz, order the bonito belly roasted with sweet red peppers and onions. A trio of tiny dining rooms is decorated with contemporary paintings and dark-wood paneling.

Calle Fermín Palma 3. www.casantonio.es. ✆ **95-327-02-62.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4:15pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Aug. Bus: 8, 10, or 16.

Casa Vicente ★ ANDALUCÍAN In the historic district, this restaurant is praised locally for the quality of its tapas and its wine. The area surrounding the town is known for its vegetables, which are showcased in such dishes as *espinaca esparragada* (a type of wild asparagus) and *alcachofas* (artichokes sautéed with garlic). For a main dish, try the *lomo de orza mozárabe* (pork tenderloin marinated 2 days in lemon and spices and served with a garlic sauce) or *bacalao encebollado* (salt cod sautéed with onions and sweet peppers). Local desserts include rice pudding and *manjarblanco mozárabe* (Moorish-style fudge).

In the Hotel Condestable, Calle Cristo Rey 3. ✆ **95-323-22-22.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–22€. MC, V. Winter Thurs–Sat and Mon–Tues 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm, Sun noon–5pm; summer Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 5:30–11:30pm. Closed Aug. Bus: 8, 10, or 16.

WHERE TO STAY IN JAÉN

Husa Europa 🏷 In the commercial and historical center of Jaén, this little hotel became a winner after a massive renovation that brought everything up to date. Although the avant-garde decor is a little severe, it manages to be cozy and contemporary at the same time. The medium-size rooms have been spruced up, as have the sparkling-clean bathrooms.

Plaza de Belén 1, 23001 Jaén. www.husa.es. ✆ **95-322-27-04.** Fax 95-322-26-92. 37 units. 40€–79€ double; 53€–99€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 8, 10, or 16. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.).

Parador de Jaén ★★★ Five kilometers (3 miles) to the west, on the hill overlooking the city, this castle is one of the government's showplace *paradores.* In the 10th century, the castle was a Muslim fortress surrounded by high protective walls and approached only by a steep winding road. The castle is still reached by the same road; you enter through a three-story-high baronial hallway, and the polite staff will show you to your balconied midsize room (doubles only), tastefully furnished and comfortable, with canopied beds and spic-and-span tile bathrooms equipped with tub/shower combos. The most charming feature of the bedrooms is the panoramic views of mountains. Make reservations well in advance because this place fills quickly.

Castillo de Santa Catalina, 23001 Jaén. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-323-00-00.** Fax 95-323-09-30. 45 units. 120€–202€ double. DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Baeza ★

45km (28 miles) NE of Jaén, 308km (191 miles) S of Madrid

Historic Baeza (known to the Romans as Vilvatia), with its Gothic and Plateresque buildings and cobblestone streets, is one of the best-preserved old towns in Spain. At twilight, when lanterns hanging from plastered-stone walls light the narrow streets, you might feel you've stumbled back into the Renaissance. The town's heyday was in the 16th and 17th centuries. Even if you don't go inside many monuments—and, indeed, many of the most charming buildings aren't open to the public—you can still get a good idea of the architecture by strolling through the *barrio monumental* and admiring the old buildings.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The nearest major rail junction, receiving **trains** from both Madrid and most of Andalucía, is the **Estación Linares-Baeza** (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), 14km (8⅔ miles) west of Baeza's center. There is one train per day from Córdoba, two per day from Madrid.

There are 20 **buses** a day from Úbeda; the ride is 15 minutes and costs 1.50€ one-way. From Jaén, there are 16 buses per day (trip time: 45 min.), costing 4€ one-way. For more information, call ✆ **90-242-22-42.**

To reach Baeza from Jaén (p. 289), follow Route N-321 northeast for 45km (28 miles). To get to Baeza from Madrid, follow Route N-IV south toward Sevilla. Take exit 292 and merge onto A-44. At exit 3, take N-332 toward Bailén/A-32/Linares. Finally, you'll have to exit onto A-6101. The town lies 308km (191 miles) south of Madrid.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at the Plaza del Pópulo s/n 23440 (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-377-99-82**), is open year-round Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

EXPLORING BAEZA

Baeza's main square, the **Plaza del Pópulo ★**, is a two-story open colonnade. The buildings here date in part from the 16th century, and the tourist office, where you can get a town map, is housed in one of the most interesting. Look for the fountain containing four half-effaced lions, the **Fuente de los Leones,** which may have been brought here from the Roman town of Cantulo.

Head south along the Cuesta de San Gil to reach the Gothic and Renaissance **Santa Iglesia Catedral ★**, Plaza de la Fuente de Santa María (✆ **95-374-04-44**), built in the 16th century on the foundations of an earlier mosque. Look for the **Puerta de la Luna (Moon Door),** and, in the interior, remodeled by Andrés de Vandelvira (architect of Jaén's cathedral) and his pupils, the carved wood and the brilliant painted *rejas* (iron screens). The **Gold Chapel** is especially stunning. The edifice possesses one of the most important Corpus Christi icons in Spain, ***La Custodia de Baeza.*** Climb the clock tower for a panoramic view of town. The cathedral is open daily October to May from 10:30am to 1pm and 4 to 6pm, and June to September 10:30am to 1pm and 5 to 7pm; admission is 4€.

The colonnade of the Plaza del Pópulo.

After leaving the cathedral, continue up the Cuesta de San Felipe to the **Palacio de Jabalquinto ★** (✆ **95-374-27-75**), a beautiful example of civil architecture in the Flamboyant Gothic style, built by Juan Alfonso de Benavides, a relative of King Fernando. Its facade is filled with interesting decorative elements, and there's a simple Renaissance-style courtyard with marble columns. Inside, two lions guard the ornate baroque stairway. Visiting hours are daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm.

WHERE TO EAT

Restaurante Juanito ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN Owner Juan Luis Pedro Salcedo, a devotee of the nearly lost art of Jaén regional cookery, revives ancient recipes in his frequently changing specials. He runs a small olive-oil outlet, and meals are made with only his own produce. Game is served in season, and many vegetable dishes incorporate ham. Among the savory and well-prepared menu items are *habas* (beans), filet of beef with tomatoes and peppers, partridge in pastry crust, house-style cod, and venison.

In the Hotel Juanito, Plaza del Arca del Agua s/n. www.juanitobaeza.com. ✆ **95-374-00-40.** Reservations required Fri–Sat. Main courses 14€–30€. MC, V. Sun–Mon 1:30–3:30pm; Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm. Closed first 2 weeks of July.

Vandelvira ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN A 16th-century former convent has been converted into this citadel of good cooking at only slightly inflated prices. Similar to a cathedral in size, the building still contains much of its original architecture and conventual furnishings, although the dining rooms only take a small portion of the structure. The summer terrace is one of the most popular bars and taverns in town. The chefs make a few fish dishes, especially *bacalao* (salt cod), but since the whole province lies far from the ocean, meats are a far better bet. Milk-fed lamb is one of the best options, and veal dishes are also outstanding. One of the more unusual specialties is pigs' knuckles stuffed with *perdiz* (partridge) and spinach. The kitchen also prepares an excellent appetizer of partridge pâté with virgin olive oil.

Calle San Francisco 14. www.vandelvira.es. ✆ **95-374-81-72.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun 1:30–4pm; Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm.

Úbeda ★★

10km (6¼ miles) NE of Jaén, 312km (194 miles) S of Madrid

A former Moorish stronghold often called the "Florence of Andalucía" for its wholesale adoption of Renaissance architecture, Úbeda is a Spanish National Landmark and a World Heritage site filled with golden-brown Renaissance palaces and tile-roofed whitewashed houses. The best way to discover Úbeda's charm is to wander its narrow cobblestone streets. The *parador* here occupies a renovated ducal palace—worth visiting for connoisseurs of architecture, even if you're not staying. Definitely allow time for a stroll through Úbeda's shops, which specialize in leather craft goods, esparto grass carpets, and very distinctive artisanal olive oils.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The nearest **train** station is the Linares-Baeza station (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**). For information on trains to and from the station, refer to the Baeza section (above).

There are 10 **buses** daily to Baeza, less than 10km (6¼ miles) away, and to Jaén. Seven buses per day go to the busy railway station at Linares-Baeza, where a train can take you virtually anywhere in Spain. Bus service to and from Córdoba, Sevilla, and Granada is also available. Úbeda's bus station is in the heart of the modern town, on Calle San José (✆ **95-375-21-57**), where signs will point you on a downhill walk to the zona monumental.

To drive here, turn off the Madrid-Córdoba road, head east for Linares, and then move on to Úbeda, a detour of 42km (26 miles). The turnoff is at the junction with N-322. From Jaén, the capital of the province, take N-321 northeast for 57km (35 miles).

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Calle Baja del Marqués 4 (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-377-92-04**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2:45pm and 4 to 7pm (June–Sept 5–8pm), Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

EXPLORING ÚBEDA

You might begin your tour at the centrally located **Plaza Vázquez de Molina** ★★, which is flanked by several mansions, including Casa de las

The dome of the Iglesia el Salvador.

Cadenas, now the Town Hall. The mansions suffered from neglect for many years but have all been recently restored.

Hospital de Santiago PERFORMING ARTS VENUE On the western edge of town, off Calle del Obispo Coros, stands the Hospital of Santiago, built by Andrés de Vandelvira in 1575 and still in use today as a cultural venue, hosting concerts and containing a minor modern art museum. Over the main entryway is a carving of Santiago (St. James) "the Moorslayer" in a traditional pose on horseback. Note the monumental staircase leading upstairs from the inner patio. In the chapel are some marvelous woodcarvings.

Av. Cristo Rey. ☎ **95-375-08-42.** Free admission. Mon–Fri 8am–3pm and 4–10pm; Sat–Sun 11am–3pm and 6–10pm.

Iglesia de San Pablo ★ CHURCH This Gothic church in the center of Old Town is almost as fascinating as the Iglesia el Salvador (see below). The San Pablo church is famous for its 1511 **south portal ★** in the Isabelline style, and for its **chapels ★** decorated with beautiful wrought-iron grilles. Vandelvira himself designed the "Heads of the Dead Chapel," the most stunning. You might also seek out the richly carved Chapel of Las Mercedes, done in the florid Isabelline style.

Plaza 1 de Mayo. ☎ **95-375-06-37.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 5:30–8:15pm; Sun 11am–1:45pm (and 7–9pm in summer).

Iglesia el Salvador ★★ CHURCH One of the grandest examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture, this church was designed in 1536 by Diego de Siloé as a family chapel and mausoleum for Francisco de los Cobos, secretary of the Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V. The richly embellished portal is mere window dressing for the wealth of decoration on the interior of the church, including a **sacristy ★★** designed by Andrés de Vandelvira with medallions, caryatids, *atlantes,* and coffered decorations and ornamentations. The many sculptures and altarpieces and the spectacular rose windows are also of special interest.

Calle Francisco de los Cobos. ✆ **95-375-81-50.** Admission 2.25€ adults, 1€ children. Mon–Sat 4:30–7pm; Sun 10:45am–2pm and 4:30–7pm.

WHERE TO EAT

Parador Restaurante ★ ANDALUCÍAN This *parador* is the best place to dine for miles around. What the kitchen cedes in creativity, it more than compensates for with authenticity. Most dishes are made with fresh market ingredients and prepared from decades-old recipes. Start with a typical dish of the area, such as cold soup with almonds, delightful on a hot day. Partridge is a local favorite—appetizers might include stuffed green peppers with partridge, stewed partridge with plums, or a refreshing salad with pickled partridge. The best fish dishes are the grilled monkfish in saffron sauce and the grilled sole with garlic-and–apple vinegar sauce, but fish is not an optimal choice in this landlocked region. Meat eaters might be tempted by regional dishes such as oxtail in red-wine sauce and stewed kid with pine nuts. The *menú del parador* is a good bet, as it includes an appetizer, a main course, and dessert—all typical of the region. The tasting menu for two showcases four typical regional dishes nightly.

Plaza Vázquez de Molina 1. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-375-03-45.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–23€; tasting menus 20€–36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm.

WHERE TO STAY IN ÚBEDA

María de Molina ★ 🎁 The *parador* (see below) is the number-one place to stay in Úbeda, but this hotel gives it serious competition. In a beautifully restored palace, the three-story hotel is in the center of the historic district. Much of the past has been retained, including stone vaulted ceilings downstairs. The hotel opens onto a marble-columned atrium in which chairs are placed in the center, with a skylight overhead. Wherever you look you'll find grace notes such as hand-carved wooden doors and marble arches over stairwells. In contrast, the bedrooms are thoroughly modernized, ranging from rather cramped singles to spacious suites. Rooms with terraces or balconies need to be booked well in advance. Try to have at least one dinner at the **restaurant,** enjoying not only its fine Andalucían cuisine but also its mellow ambience—particularly inviting at night.

Plaza del Ayuntamiento, 23400 Úbeda. www.hotel-maria-de-molina.com. ✆ **95-379-53-56.** Fax 95-379-36-94. 27 units. 83€–95€ double, 105€ suite; 116€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Palacio de la Rambla ★★ 🎁 The front entrance of this palace is fortress-like, with colored Mudéjar tiles, and inside the cloistered courtyard has Plateresque and Renaissance-style carvings, granite columns, and forests of ivy. Yet only eight rooms here are open to paying guests. The spacious manorial rooms under soaring ceilings boast many of their original furnishings, but everything has been supplemented with modern conveniences. Each room is individually furnished, often with antiques, tapestries, objets d'art, and other remnants of old Spain's aristocratic life. You can still visit two incredibly formal salons, each outfitted as if awaiting a visit from Felipe II.

Plaza del Marqués 1, 23400 Úbeda. www.palaciodelarambla.com. ✆ **95-375-01-96.** Fax 95-375-02-67. 8 units. 120€ double; 140€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 10€. Closed Jan 10–28 and July 18–Aug 11. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Parador de Úbeda ★★★ On the town's central square stands this 16th-century palace-turned-*parador,* which shares an old paved plaza with the Iglesia el Salvador (see above) and its dazzling facade. The formal entrance to this Renaissance palace leads to an enclosed patio, encircled by two levels of Moorish arches, where palms and potted plants sit on the tile floors. The rooms are nearly two stories high, with beamed ceilings, tall windows, and antiques and reproductions.

Plaza Vázquez de Molina 1, 23400 Úbeda. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-375-03-45.** Fax 95-375-12-59. 36 units. 80€–185€ double; 170€–240€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

GRANADA ★★★

415km (258 miles) S of Madrid, 122km (76 miles) NE of Málaga

"After you've seen Granada, the rest of Spain will be but a footnote," claimed poet and playwright Federico García Lorca. The number-one attraction in Spain, the Alhambra, presides over the city. Granada is also a thriving university town, and its Old Quarter is still riddled with aromatic Arabic tearooms called *teterías.* Washington Irving first made the city a tourist destination through his fanciful *Tales of the Alhambra,* which encouraged Americans and Brits to relive the romance and intrigue of the city's past.

Things to Do The Moorish Nasrid dynasty wanted to create "heaven on earth" in building the **Alhambra** palace—and so they did, against a backdrop of the snowcapped Sierra Nevada mountains. Immerse yourself in the enchantment of **El Generalife,** the sultan's vacation retreat, and wander the halls of the **Palacio de Carlos V,** certainly a candidate for Spain's most beautiful Renaissance building.

Relaxation Stroll along romantic **Carrera del Darro** on the Darro River with its dusty antique shops and closet-size wine bars. Have a leisurely lunch in the **Parador de Granada,** right in the Alhambra. This garden restaurant lies in a former Franciscan monastery. Relax in the **Patio de Los Leones (Court of the Lions),** the most peaceful courtyard of the Alhambra with its splashing fountains. For a dramatic sunset, head for El Generalife.

Restaurants & Dining Begin your night with regional wine and tapas at the mellow old bars along **Campo del Principe.** Also, try the side streets off **Plaza Nueva.** North African spicing and culinary traditions still inform much of Granada's cuisine, as evoked by such dishes as lamb with honey or partridge stewed with dates and almonds. What's a real local dish? Try *tortilla Sacromonte* (omelet with calf's brains and lamb or veal testicles).

Entertainment & Nightlife Two big festivals dominate the agenda—the **International Theater Festival,** which attracts avant-garde theater groups from around the world, and the **Festival Internacional de Música y Danza.** Classical music, ballet, and flamenco are presented in the **Palacio de Carlos V.** The large student population also makes for a lively bar scene.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642** in the U.S., or 90-240-05-00 toll-free in Spain) flies to Granada from Madrid four times daily. **Vueling** (www.vueling.com; ✆ **80-720-01-00** from within Spain) has three direct flights a day from Barcelona to Granada. Granada's **Federico García Lorca Airport** (*aeropuerto nacional*) is 16km (10 miles) west of the center of town on Carretera Málaga; call ✆ **90-240-47-04** for information. Other than a minor tourist-information booth and an ATM, there are few services here. A bus route links the airport with the center of Granada. The one-way fare is 3€. The bus runs daily 5:30am to 8pm. Trip time is 45 minutes.

The **train** station is **Estación de RENFE de Granada,** Av. Andaluces s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). Granada is well linked with the most important Spanish cities, especially those of Andalucía. Four trains per day arrive from Sevilla, taking 4 to 5 hours, depending on the train, and costing 25€ for a one-way ticket. From Madrid, two daily trains arrive in Granada, taking 4½ hours and costing 68€.

Granada is served by far more **buses** than trains. It has links to virtually all the major towns and cities in Andalucía, and even to Madrid. The main bus terminal is **Estación de Autobuses de Granada,** Carretera de Jaén s/n (✆ **95-818-54-80**). One of the most heavily used bus routes is the one between Sevilla and Granada. Ten buses run per day, costing 19€ for a one-way ticket. The trip is 3 hours. You can also reach Granada in 3 hours on one of nine daily buses from Córdoba; cost is 14€ for a one-way ticket. If you're on the Costa del Sol, the run is just 2 hours, costing 12€ per one-way ticket. This is a very popular routing, with 19 buses going back and forth between Granada and the coast per day. For bus information, contact **Alsa** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **95-818-54-80**).

Granada is connected by superhighway to Madrid, Málaga, and Sevilla. Many sightseers prefer to make the drive from Madrid to Granada in 2 days, rather than 1. If that is your plan, Jaén (p. 289) makes a perfect stopover.

GETTING AROUND Just a few buses will take you pretty much anywhere you want to go in Granada. The 30 and 32 city buses (1.50€) run continuously from Plaza Isabel la Catolica to the ticket office of the Alhambra, and the 31 and 32 buses leave from the same spot for Sacromonte. Taxis are also relatively inexpensive.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Patronato Provincial de Turismo de Granada,** Plaza de Mariana Pineda 10 (www.turgranada.es; ✆ **95-824-71-46**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 3pm. It's the best spot to get simple questions answered. To dig a little deeper or to get information on the surrounding area, the **Tourist Information Office of Junta de Andalucía,** Calle de Santa Ana 4 (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-857-52-02**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

Exploring Granada

There are two schools of thought about sightseeing in Granada. One school says that after seeing the Alhambra you can die happy and need not bestir yourself to seek anything further, and the other holds that Granada is one of the most interesting and sociable cities in Spain and it would be a pity if you overlooked a bit of it. If you subscribe to the latter opinion, plan to spend at least a full day (and evening) walking around to see the most interesting sights.

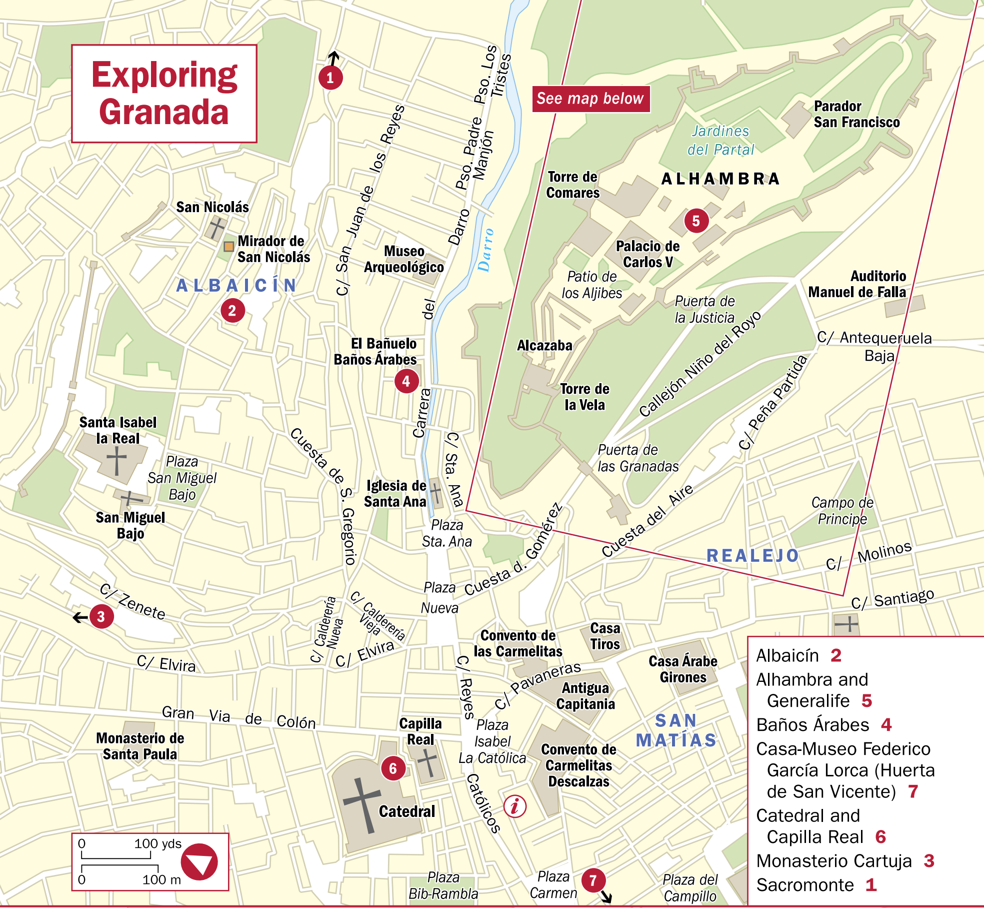
Strolling Andalucía's Most Romantic Street

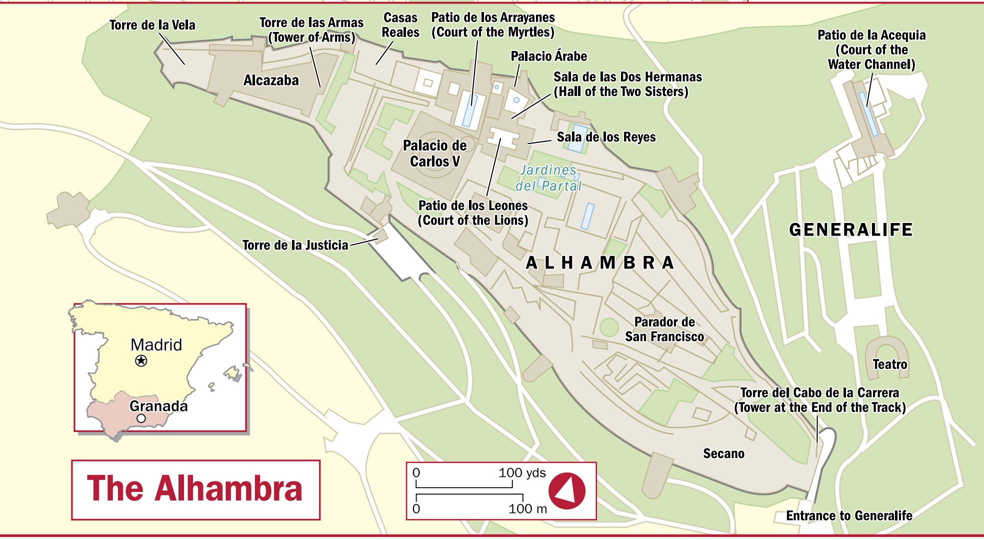
The most-walked street in Granada is **Carrera del Darro** (pictured), running north along the Darro River. It was discovered by the Romantic artists of the 19th century; many of their etchings (subsequently engraved) of scenes along this street were widely circulated, spreading the fame of Granada throughout Europe. You can still find some of these old engravings in the musty antiques shops. Carrera del Darro ends at Paseo de los Tristes (Ave. of the Sad Ones), so named for the funeral corteges that used to go by here on the way to the cemetery.

The Puerta de Elvira is the gate through which Fernando and Isabel made their triumphant entry into Granada in 1492 after the last Moorish ruler, Boabdil, fled. It was once a grisly place where the rotting heads of executed criminals hung from its portals. The quarter surrounding the gate was the Muslim section (*morería*) until all Muslims were forced to convert or leave the country about a century after the Reconquest.

One of the more colorful streets is **Calle de Elvira;** west of it, the medieval residential neighborhood of the Albaicín rises on a hill. (Granada's modern mosque is in this quarter.) In the 17th and 18th centuries, many artisans occupied the shops and ateliers along Elvira and the side streets radiating from it. It's a good area to shop for decorative antiques. The **Iglesia de San Andrés,** begun in 1528, and its Mudéjar bell tower are also on Calle de Elvira. Much of the church was destroyed by fire in the early 19th century, but several interesting paintings and sculptures remain. Another old church in this area is the Iglesia de Santiago, constructed in 1501 and dedicated to St. James the Apostle, patron saint of Spain. Built on the site of an Arab mosque, it was damaged in an 1884 earthquake. The church contains the tomb of architect Diego de Siloé (1495–1563), who did much to change the face of the city.

Despite its name, the oldest extant square in Granada is **Plaza Nueva,** which, under the Muslims, was the site of the woodcutters' bridge. The Darro was covered over here, but its waters still flow underneath the square (which in Franco's time was named Plaza del General Franco). On the east side


Exploring Granada
See map below
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
San Nicolás
Mirador de San Nicolás
ALBAICÍN
C/ San Juan de los Reyes
Pso. Padre Manjón
Pso. Los Tristes
Darro
Carrera del Darro
Museo Arqueológico
El Bañuelo Baños Árabes
Santa Isabel la Real
Plaza San Miguel Bajo
San Miguel Bajo
Cuesta de S. Gregorio
Iglesia de Santa Ana
C/ Sta. Ana
Plaza Sta. Ana
Plaza Nueva
Cuesta d. Gomérez
C/ Zenete
C/ Elvira
C/ Calderería Nueva
C/ Calderería Vieja
Gran Via de Colón
Monasterio de Santa Paula
Capilla Real
Catedral
C/ Reyes Católicos
Plaza Isabel La Católica
Convento de las Carmelitas
C/ Pavaneras
Casa Tiros
Antigua Capitania
Convento de Carmelitas Descalzas
Casa Árabe Girones
SAN MATÍAS
Plaza Bib-Rambla
Plaza Carmen
Plaza del Campillo
Torre de Comares
ALHAMBRA
Jardines del Partal
Parador San Francisco
Palacio de Carlos V
Patio de los Aljibes
Puerta de la Justicia
Alcazaba
Torre de la Vela
Puerta de las Granadas
Callejón Niño del Royo
C/ Peña Partida
Cuesta del Aire
Auditorio Manuel de Falla
C/ Antequeruela Baja
Campo de Principe
REALEJO
C/ Molinos
C/ Santiago
0 100 yds
0 100 m
Albaicín 2
Alhambra and Generalife 5
Baños Árabes 4
Casa-Museo Federico García Lorca (Huerta de San Vicente) 7
Catedral and Capilla Real 6
Monasterio Cartuja 3
Sacromonte 1


Torre de la Vela
Torre de las Armas (Tower of Arms)
Casas Reales
Patio de los Arrayanes (Court of the Myrtles)
Palacio Árabe
Sala de las Dos Hermanas (Hall of the Two Sisters)
Sala de los Reyes
Alcazaba
Palacio de Carlos V
Jardines del Partal
Patio de los Leones (Court of the Lions)
Torre de la Justicia
ALHAMBRA
Parador de San Francisco
Patio de la Acequia (Court of the Water Channel)
GENERALIFE
Teatro
Torre del Cabo de la Carrera (Tower at the End of the Track)
Secano
Entrance to Generalife
Madrid
Granada
The Alhambra
0 100 yds
0 100 m

of Plaza Nueva is the 16th-century Iglesia de Santa Ana, built by Siloé. Inside its five-nave interior you can see Churrigueresque reredos and coffered ceiling.

The *corrida* has a valiant history in Granada, with the most important bullfights taking place from the third week of May through the third week of June. The final Sunday of September closes out the season with a special card in honor of the Virgen de las Angustias, Granada's patron saint. The 1928 bullring seats 14,500, so there are usually good seats available. The **Plaza de Toros,** the bullring, is on Avenida de Doctor Olóriz, close to the soccer stadium. For more information, call the tourist office.

Houses of the Albaicín.

Albaicín ★★ ICON This Old Quarter on one of Granada's two main hills stands apart from the city of 19th-century buildings and wide boulevards. A holdover from the Nasrid empire, it even predates the Renaissance city that has sprung up around the cathedral. The Albaicín and Gypsy caves of Sacromonte farther up the hill (see below) were the homes of marginalized Muslims and Gypsies declared beyond the pale by the Christian conquerors. The narrow labyrinth of crooked streets in the Albaicín was too hilly to tear down in the name of progress; ironically, it is now some of the most desirable real estate in Granada. Its alleyways, cisterns, fountains, plazas, whitewashed houses, villas, and the decaying remnants of the old city gate have all been preserved. Here and there you can catch a glimpse of a private patio filled with fountains and plants, a traditional, elegant way of life that continues. Bus: 31 or 32.

Reserving for the Alhambra

Because of the overwhelming crowds, the government limits the number of people who can enter the Alhambra. Go as early as possible, but even if you get there at 10am you may not be admitted until 1:30pm. If you arrive after 4pm, it's unlikely you'll get in at all. There's a way to avoid these long lines: Tickets can be acquired on the Internet at **www.servicaixa.com**. Complete information about ticket sale is offered at **www.alhambra-patronato.es**. Tickets bought on the Internet carry a 1€ surcharge and can be picked up in the automatic machines of La Caixa, at the entrance to the Alhambra. (You'll need the same credit card that you used to pay for the tickets.) These automatic machines are in the Access Pavilion at the Alhambra. The ticket is valid only for the day you specified.

The detailed mosaic work of the Alhambra.

Alhambra and Generalife ★★★ PALACE One of Europe's greatest attractions, the stunningly beautiful and celebrated **Calat Alhambra (Red Castle)** is perhaps the most remarkable fortress ever constructed. Muslim architecture in Spain reached its apogee at this palace once occupied by Nasrid princes, their families, and their political and personal functionaries. Although the Alhambra was converted into a lavish palace in the 13th and 14th centuries, it was originally constructed for defensive purposes on a rocky hilltop outcropping above the Darro River. The modern city of Granada was built across the river from the Alhambra, about .8km (½ mile) from its western foundations.

When you first see the Alhambra, its somewhat somber exterior may surprise you. The true delights of this Moorish palace lie within. Tickets are sold in the office at the Entrada del Generalife y de la Alhambra. Enter through the incongruous 14th-century **Puerta de la Justicia (Gateway of Justice) ★**. Most visitors do not need an expensive guide but will be content to stroll through the richly ornamented open-air rooms, with their lacelike walls and courtyards with fountains. Many of the Arabic inscriptions translate to "Only Allah is conqueror."

The strictly defined pathway of the tour begins in the **Mexuar ★★★**, also known as Palacio Nazaríes (Palace of the Nasrids), which is the first of three palaces that compose the Alhambra. This was the main council chamber where the chief ministers met. The largest of these chambers was the Hall of the Mexuar, which Spanish rulers converted to a Catholic chapel in the 1600s. From this chapel a panoramic view spreads over the rooftops of the Albaicín.

Pass through another chamber of the sultan's ministers, the Cuarto Dorado (Golden Room), and you'll find yourself in the small but beautiful **Patio del Mexuar.** Constructed in 1365, this is where the emir sat on giant cushions and listened to the petitions of his subjects, or met privately with his chief ministers. The windows here are surrounded by panels and richly decorated with tiles and stucco.

The Palace of the Nasrids, Mexuar, was constructed around two courtyards, the **Patio de los Arrayanes (Court of the Myrtles)** and the **Patio de los Leones (Court of the Lions) ★★★**. The latter was the royal residence.

The Court of the Myrtles contains a narrow reflecting pool banked by myrtle trees. Note the decorative and rather rare tiles, which are arguably the finest in the Alhambra. Behind it is the **Salón de Embajadores (Hall of the Ambassadors) ★★**, with an elaborately carved throne room that was built between 1334 and 1354. The crowning cedar wood dome of this salon evokes the seven heavens of the Muslim cosmos. Here bay windows open onto **panoramic vistas ★★** of the enveloping countryside.

An opening off the Court of the Myrtles leads to the greatest architectural achievement of the Alhambra, the Patio de los Leones (Court of Lions), constructed by Muhammad V. At its center is Andalucía's finest fountain, which rests on 12 marble lions. These marble lions represent the hours of the day, the months of the year, and the signs of the zodiac. Legend claims that water flowed from the mouth of a different lion each hour of the day. This courtyard is lined with arcades supported by 124 (count them) slender marble columns. This was the heart of the palace, the most private section where the emir and his family retreated.

At the back of the Leones courtyard is the **Sala de los Abencerrajes ★**, named for a noble family whom 16th-century legend says were slaughtered here, either because they were political rivals of the emir, or because one of them was sleeping with the emir's wife. It makes a terrific tale, but there is no historical evidence to support it.

Opening onto the Court of Lions are other salons of intrigue, notably the Hall of the Two Sisters, **Sala de las Dos Hermanas,** which is named for the two identical large white marble slabs in the pavement. Boabdil's stern, unforgiving mother, Ayesha, once inhabited the Hall of the Two Sisters. This salon has a stunning dome of carved plaster and is often cited as one of the finest examples of Spanish Islamic architecture.

The nearby **Sala de los Reyes (Hall of Kings)** was the great banquet hall of the Alhambra. Its ceiling paintings are on leather and date from the 1300s. A gallery leads to the **Patio de la Reja (Court of the Window Grille).** This is where Washington Irving lived in furnished rooms, and where he began to write his famous book *Tales of the Alhambra.* The best-known tale is the legend of Zayda, Zorayda, and Zorahayda, the three beautiful princesses who fell in love with three captured Spanish soldiers outside the Torre de las Infantas. Irving credits the French with saving the Alhambra for posterity, but in fact they were responsible for blowing up seven of the towers in 1812, and it was a Spanish soldier who cut the fuse before more damage could be done. When the Duke of Wellington arrived a few years later, he chased out the chickens, the Gypsies, and the transient beggars who were using the Alhambra as a tenement and set up housekeeping here himself.

Before you proceed to the Emperor Carlos V's palace, look at some other gems around the Court of Lions, including the **Baños Reales (Royal Baths),** with their lavish, multicolored decorations. Light enters through star-shaped apertures. To the immediate east of the baths lies the **Daraxa Garden,** and to its immediate south the lovely and resplendent **Mirador de Daraxa,** the sultana's private balcony onto Granada.

To the immediate southeast of these attractions are the **Jardines del Partal ★★** and their perimeter towers. These beautiful gardens occupy a space that once was the kitchen garden, filled with milling servants preparing the sultan's banquets. These gardens are dominated by the **Torre de Las Damas (Ladies' Tower).** This tower and its pavilion, with its five-arched porticoes, are all that are left of the once-famous Palacio del Partal, the oldest palace at the Alhambra. Of less interest are the perimeter towers, including the Mihrab Tower, a former Nasrid oratory; Torre de las Infantas (Tower of the Princesses); and Torre de la Cautiva (Tower of the Captive). Like the Damas tower, these towers were also once sumptuously decorated inside; today only some decoration remains.

A staircase in Emperor Carlos V's Palace.

Next you can move to the immediate southwest to visit **Emperor Carlos V's Palace (Palacio de Carlos V) ★**, where the Holy Roman emperor lived. Carlos may have been horrified when he saw a cathedral placed in the middle of the great mosque at Córdoba, but he's also responsible for some architectural confusion in Granada. He literally built a Renaissance palace in the middle of this Moorish stronghold. It's quite beautiful, but terribly out of place in such a setting—Carlos V did not consider the Nasrid palaces grand enough. In 1526 he ordered Pedro Machuca, a student of Michelangelo, to design him a fitting royal residence. He financed the palace by levying a tax on the Muslims. In spite of its incongruous location, the final result is one of the purest examples of classical Renaissance architecture in Spain.

The square exterior opens to reveal a magnificent, circular, two-story courtyard that is open to the sky. Inside the palace are two museums. The first, **Museo de la Alhambra ★★** (✆ **95-822-75-27**), is a museum of Hispano-Muslim art, its salons opening onto the Myrtle and Mexuar courts. They display artifacts retrieved from the Alcázar, including fragments of sculpture, as well as unusual braziers and even perfume burners used in the harems. The most outstanding exhibit is a **blue amphora ★** that is 132cm (52 in.) high. This precious object stood for years in the Hall of the Two Sisters. Also look for an ablutions basin dating from the 10th century and adorned with lions chasing stags and an ibex. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 7:15pm and Sunday 9am to 5:45pm.

The palace also houses the **Museo Bellas Artes en la Alhambra** (✆ **95-822-14-49**), open Tuesday to Saturday 9am to 8pm and Sunday 9am to noon. Of minor interest, it displays mostly religious paintings and sculpture from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

Walking to the Alhambra

Many visitors opt to take a taxi or the bus to the Alhambra, but some hardy souls enjoy the uphill climb from the cathedral at the Plaza de la Lonja. (Signs indicate the winding roads and the steps that lead to the Alhambra.) If you decide to walk, enter the Alhambra via the Cuesta de Gomérez, which, although steep, is the quickest and shortest pedestrian route. It begins at the Plaza Nueva, about 4 blocks east of the cathedral, and goes steeply uphill to the Puerta de las Granadas, the first of two gates to the Alhambra. The second, another 183m (600 ft.) uphill, is the Puerta de la Justicia, which accepts 90% of the touristic visits to the Alhambra. ***Caution:*** Beware of self-styled guides milling around the parking lot, as they are more interested in separating you and your euros than in providing any real guidance.

Before leaving the Alhambra precincts, try to see the **Alcazaba**, which dates from the 9th century and is the oldest part of the complex. This rugged fortress from the Middle Ages was built for defensive purposes. For a spectacular **view ★★**, climb the **Torre de la Vela (Watchtower)**. You look into the lower town onto Plaza Nueva, and you can also see the snowcapped Sierra Nevada in the distance. From the tower you can also view the Generalife (see below) and the "Gypsy hill" of Sacromonte.

Exit from the Alhambra via the Puerta de la Justicia, and then circumnavigate the Alhambra's southern foundations until you reach the gardens of the summer palace, where Paseo de los Cipreses quickly leads you to the main building of the **Generalife ★★**, built in the 13th century to overlook the Alhambra and set on 30 lush hectares (74 acres). The sultans used to spend their summers in this palace (pronounced Heh-neh-rah-*lee*-feh), safely locked away with their harems. Don't expect an Alhambra in miniature: The Generalife was always meant to be a retreat, even from the splendors of the Alhambra. Lying north of the Alhambra, this country estate of the Nasrid emirs was begun in the 13th century, but the palace and gardens have been much altered over the years. The palace is mainly noted for its beautiful courtyards, including **Patio de Polo,** where the visitors of yore would arrive on horseback.

The highlight of the Generalife is its **gardens ★★★**, begun in the 13th century but much modified over the years. Originally, they contained orchards and pastures for domestic animals. Of special note is **Escalera del Agua (the Water Staircase),** with water flowing gently down. An enclosed Oriental garden, **Patio de la Acequía,** was constructed around a long pool, with rows of water jets making graceful arches above it. The **Patio de la Sultana** (also called the Patio de los Cipreses) was the secret rendezvous point for Zoraxda, wife of Sultan Abu Hasan, and her lover, the chief of the Abencerrajes.

Palacio de Carlos V. www.alhambra-patronato.es. ✆ **90-244-12-21.** Comprehensive ticket, including Alhambra and Generalife, 13€; Museo Bellas Artes 2€; Museo de la Alhambra free; garden visits 7€; illuminated visits 13€. Oct 15–Mar 14 daily 8:30am–6pm, floodlit visits Fri–Sat 8–9:30pm; Mar 15–Oct 14 daily 8:30am–8pm, floodlit visits Fri–Sat 10–11:30pm. Bus: 30 or 32.

Baños Árabes ★ RUINS It's remarkable that these 11th-century "baths of the walnut tree," as they were known by the Moors, escaped destruction during the reign of the Reyes Católicos (Fernando and Isabel). Among the oldest buildings still standing in Granada, and among the best-preserved Muslim baths in Spain, they predate the Alhambra. Many of the stones used in their construction show the signs of Visigothic and Roman carving, especially the capitals.

Carrera del Darro 31. ✆ **95-802-78-00.** Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm. Bus: 31 or 32.

Casa-Museo Federico García Lorca (Huerta de San Vicente) ★ 🎁 HISTORIC HOME Poet/dramatist Federico García Lorca, author of *Blood Wedding, The House of Bernarda Alba,* and *Poet in New York,* spent many happy summers with his family here at their vacation home. He moved to Granada in 1909, when he was a dreamy-eyed schoolboy and was endlessly fascinated with the city's life, including the Alhambra and the Gypsies, whom he later described compassionately in his *Gypsy Ballads*. The house is decorated with green trim and grillwork and filled with family memorabilia such as furniture and portraits. You can look out at the Alhambra from one of its balconies. You may inspect the poet's upstairs bedroom and see his oak desk stained with ink. Look for the white stool that he carried to the terrace to watch the sun set over Granada. The house is in the Fuentevaqueros section of Granada, near the airport, and is a fairly long walk from the cathedral (it's far quicker to take a city bus).

Calle de la Virgen Blanca s/n, Parque Federico García Lorca. www.huertadesanvicente.com. ✆ **95-825-84-66.** Admission 3€. Apr–June and Sept Tues–Sun 10am–12:30pm and 5–7:30pm; July–Aug Tues–Sun 10am–2:30pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–12:30pm and 4–6:30pm. Bus: 6.

Catedral and Capilla Real ★★ CATHEDRAL This richly ornate Renaissance cathedral with its spectacular altar is one of the country's architectural highlights, acclaimed for its beautiful facade and gold-and-white interior. It was begun in 1521 and completed in 1714. Behind the cathedral (entered separately) is the Flamboyant Gothic **Royal Chapel ★★**, where the remains of Queen Isabel and her husband, Fernando, lie. It was their wish to be buried in recaptured Granada, not Castilla or Aragón. The coffins are remarkably tiny—a reminder of how short they must have been. Accenting the tombs is a wrought-iron grille, itself a masterpiece. Occupying much larger tombs are the remains of their daughter, Juana la Loca (the Mad), and her husband, Felipe el Hermoso (the Handsome). In the sacristy, you can view Isabel's personal **art collection ★★**, including works by Rogier van der Weyden and various Spanish and Italian masters such as Botticelli. The cathedral is in the center of Granada off two prominent streets, Gran Vía de Colón and Calle de San Jerónimo. The Capilla Real abuts the cathedral's eastern edge.

Plaza de la Lonja, Gran Vía de Colón 5. www.capillarealgranada.com. ✆ **95-822-29-59.** Cathedral 3.50€; chapel 3.50€. Daily 10:30am–1:30pm and 3:30–6:30pm (4–8pm in summer). Bus: 6, 9, or 11.

Sacromonte HISTORIC SITE Hundreds of Gypsies once lived on the "Holy Mountain" on the outskirts of Granada above the Albaicín. The mountain was named for the Christians martyred here and for its long-ago role as a pilgrimage site. Many of the caves were heavily damaged by rain in 1962, forcing most occupants to seek shelter elsewhere. Nearly all the Gypsies remaining are in one way or another involved with tourism. (Some don't even live here—they commute from modern apartments in the city.)

A visit to the caves is almost always included as part of the morning and (more frequently) afternoon city tours offered every day by such companies as **Grana Visión** (www.granavision.com; ✆ **90-233-00-02**).

White Gypsy caves in Sacromonte.

You can also walk uphill by yourself, although we advise a bus or taxi after dark. The best way to see some of the caves and to actually learn something about Gypsy Granada is to visit the **Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte ★**, Barranco de los Negros (www.sacromontegranada.com; ✆ **95-821-51-20**). This interpretation center is a great source of Roma (Gypsy) pride. Several caves are shown as lodgings while others are set up as studios for traditional weaving, pottery, basketry, and metalwork. The museum is open April to October Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 9pm, and November to March Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm. Admission is 5€. The best way to get here is via Bus 34.

In the evenings, many caves become performance venues for the Granada Gypsy flamenco style known as zambra. Performances demonstrate varying degrees of authenticity and artistry, but one of the best spectaculars is presented at **Venta El Gallo,** Barranco Los Negros 5 (www.ventaelgallo.com; ✆ **95-822-84-76**). A *zambra* performance has three stages, corresponding to the three parts of a Gypsy wedding. It is an atmospheric evening that you will not soon forget, but expect a certain amount of flim-flam, ostentatious showmanship, and attempts to sell you overpriced drinks. Make your reservation for the show without dinner (unless you feel you have to sit in front) but do pay the extra charge for transportation via minibus because city buses stop running at 11pm, when the musicians and dancers will just be hitting their stride. Admission is 22€, with an additional 6€ for transportation. Dinner and show are 52€.

Monasterio Cartuja MONASTERY This 16th-century monastery, off the Albaicín on the outskirts of Granada, is sometimes called the "Christian answer to the Alhambra" because of its ornate stucco and marble and the baroque Churrigueresque fantasy in the sacristy. Its most notable paintings are by Bocanegra, its outstanding sculpture by Mora. The church of this Carthusian monastery was decorated with baroque stucco in the 17th century, and its 18th-century sacristy is an excellent example of latter-day baroque style. Sometimes one of the Carthusian monks will take you on a guided tour.

Paseo de Cartujar s/n. ☎ **95-816-19-32.** Admission 3.50€. Daily 10am–1pm and 4–8pm (closes at 6pm in winter). Bus: 8 from cathedral.

Where to Eat

EXPENSIVE

Carmen de San Miguel ★ ANDALUCÍAN Located on the hill leading up to the Alhambra, this likable restaurant offers spectacular views over the city center and innovative "Nuevo Cocina Andaluza." Forget about the same old tired grilled hake when you can get roasted sea bass with a yogurt aioli and a salad of grilled eggplant and spring onions. As a starter, consider the "lasagna" of sliced morcilla sausage, a purée of roasted apples, and a tomato concasse. The flavors are Andalucían, but the preparations owe more to contemporary Spanish cookery. The wines are from throughout the country, but there is an especially strong emphasis on regional wines from Andalucía.

Plaza de Torres Bermejas 3. www.carmensanmiguel.com. ☎ **95-822-67-23.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–24€; *menú degustación* 45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm; winter Sun 1:30–4pm. Bus: 30 or 32.

El Claustro ★★ ANDALUCÍAN Also serving New Andalucían cooking, this stylish and soothing restaurant is set within what was originally built in 1540 as a cloister for nuns. Its soaring and heavily beamed ceiling exudes Renaissance artistry, and windows overlook the graceful symmetry of an arcaded courtyard where nuns used to pray. Chef-owner Juan Andrés R. Morilla, who represented Spain in the 2011 Bocuse D'Or international cooking competition, has created a menu that is savory, well conceived, and imaginative, and includes such starters as a salad of marinated rabbit, a casserole of red lentils with razor-shell clams, and a Granada-style salad of salt cod with oranges. Main courses change several times a year. You can enjoy Dublin prawns with artichoke salad, black rice with large prawns, filet of sole with a confit of carrots, and a succulent roast suckling pig.

In the AC Hotel Palacio Santa Paula, Gran Vía de Colón 31, 18001 Granada. www.restauranteelclaustro.com. ☎ **95-880-57-40.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–26€; *menú degustación* 60€–100€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Bus: 3, 6, 9, or 11.

El Huerto de Juan Ranas ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN Come when the restaurant is closed and you'll see nothing more than a blank white wall pierced by the outline of a forbidding door. Return at night when the candles are lit and floodlights shine across the ravine upon the Alhambra. Today Mudéjar-inspired tilework and playful streams of water create a Hispano-Moorish environment of enormous charm. Upstairs you can order tapas on the vine-covered terrace. Gastronomes and romantics, however, descend into the dining room. Clients are encouraged to remain as long as they like, without worrying about giving up their tables for a second seating. Dishes incorporate the Spanish and Arab traditions, and might include Iberian steak with caramelized onions, a Moroccan version of *pastela* (meat cakes with eggplant), lamb couscous with vegetables, rack of lamb with crackling herbs, eggplant (aubergine) with honey sauce, or scrambled eggs with fresh salmon. Unless you're familiar with the upper reaches of the Albaicín neighborhood after dark, it's best to come here by taxi.

Calle de Atarazana 8 (Mirador de San Nicolás). ☎ **95-828-69-25.** Reservations recommended for the restaurant. Main courses 19€–40€; fixed-price menus 45€–57€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8–11:30pm. Bus: 31.

MODERATE

Albahaca 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN You'd have to be in Granada for a while to discover this local favorite, a little *mesón* (inn) in a century-old building in a neighborhood with lots of short-term rental apartments. Owner Javier Jiménez seats 28 diners at eight tables in an old-fashioned restaurant decorated in a rustic style with bare white walls. The traditional dishes served are unpretentious and tasty, especially the *salmorejo* (creamy tomato gazpacho) and *ensalada de dos salsas* (a green salad with two dressings). The trout with orange sauce is marvelous, as is *pastel de berenjena con salmón marinado* (layered pastry with eggplant and marinated salmon). For dessert, try the velvety yogurt mousse.

Calle Varela 17. ✆ **95-822-49-23.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 11€–18€; *menú del día* 15€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1–4pm. Closed Aug. Bus: C, 8, or 13.

Chikito SPANISH Chikito is across from the famous tree-shaded square where García Lorca met with other members of El Rinconcillo (the Little Corner), a group of young men who brought a brief but dazzling cultural renaissance to their hometown in the 1920s. The cafe where they met has now changed its name, and today is a bar/restaurant. In fair weather, guests enjoy drinks and snacks on tables placed in the square; in winter they retreat inside to the tapas bar. Specialties include *sopa sevillana,* shrimp cocktail, Basque hake, roasted tuna, oxtail, *zarzuela,* grilled swordfish, and Argentine-style veal steak.

Plaza del Campillo 9. www.restaurantechikito.com. ✆ **95-822-33-64.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€; fixed-price menu 22€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–4pm and 8–11:30pm. Bus: 1, 2, or 7.

La Mimbre ANDALUCÍAN This is the most conveniently located dining spot for those exploring the Alhambra and Generalife. The little eatery is tucked, surprisingly, right into the walls of the sultan's palace itself. Over the years it has been a popular place for many poets and artists who have flocked to Granada. The building dates from the end of the 19th century and has a traditional decor. The garden, with its old Andalucían fountain, is a romantic choice for dining on a summer evening. The menu is backed by a good and affordable selection of regional wines. Oxtail is one of the chef's specialties. Other popular dishes include the salad of string beans and slices of cooked ham and the *choto al ajillo* (braised kid studded with garlic).

Av. del Generalife, Alhambra. ✆ **95-822-22-76.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 16€–24€. AE, MC, V. Oct–Apr daily noon–4pm; May–Sept daily 8:30–11:30pm. Closed part of Jan. Bus: 1, 6, or 7.

INEXPENSIVE

Botánico ANDALUCÍAN In front of the Botanical Gardens of the University of Granada, this minimalist restaurant is popular with students and is known for vegetarian dishes influenced by the cooking of Asia and North Africa. But it is hardly meat-free: The signature dish is oven-baked duck with couscous, and the kitchen makes a delicious Moorish-inspired dish with chicken, ground meat, and cinnamon. Vegetarians will find creative salads that feature many different flavors and combinations along with several vegetarian casserole offerings, such as meatless lasagna. There is a limited but good selection of homemade desserts as well.

Málaga 3. ✆ **95-827-15-98.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 7.90€–30€; set lunch menus 12€–13€. MC, V. Daily 1pm–2am. Bus: 4, 7, or 13.

Mirador de Morayma ANDALUCÍAN Don't expect subtlety or big-city sophistication here—what you'll get are generous portions of good cooking and a deep pride in the region's rural traditions. Facing the Alhambra in an antique Renaissance-era house in the Albaicín, this is a large, rambling restaurant with a half-dozen dining rooms and three outdoor terraces. According to tradition, Morayma, the wife of Boabdil, last of the Muslim kings, was born here. The hardworking staff prepares dishes like gazpacho, roasted goat in wine sauce, slabs of beefsteak with a sauce of aromatic herbs, grilled Spanish sausages, and roasted lamb.

Calle Pianista García Carrillo 2. www.miradordemorayma.com. ☎ **95-822-82-90.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–24€; fixed-price menus 22€–90€. AE, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 8–11:30pm; Sun 1:30–3:30pm. Bus: 31 or 32.

Restaurante Sevilla SPANISH Attracting a mixed crowd of all ages, the Sevilla is definitely *típico,* but with an upbeat elegance. The place was discovered by García Lorca, a patron in the 1930s, and composer Manuel de Falla, and it still has ancient photos on the wall of all the Hollywood types who used to come here in the Franco years. Among the most popular menu items are Andalucían veal with fresh vegetables, topped off by flan, plus crusty homemade bread and the wine of Valdepeñas. To a change of pace, try *sopa virule,* made with pine nuts and chicken breast, followed by *cordero a la pastoril* (lamb with herbs and paprika). The best dessert is bananas flambé. You can dine inside, which is pleasantly decorated, or on the terrace. The restaurant is opposite the Royal Chapel, near the Plaza Isabel Católica.

Calle Oficios 12. www.restaurantesevilla.es. ☎ **95-822-12-23.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–26€; *menú degustación* 36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4:30pm and 8–11:30pm. Bus: 32 or 39.

Shopping

Alcaicería, once the Moorish silk market, is next to the cathedral in the lower city. The narrow streets of this rebuilt village of shops are filled with vendors selling the arts and crafts of Granada province. For the souvenir hunter, the Alcaicería offers a good assortment tiles, castanets, and wire figures of Don Quixote chasing windmills. Lots of Spanish jewelry can be found here. For the window-shopper in particular, it makes a pleasant stroll. A more interesting shopping experience is found in the souk of the alleyways of **Calderería Vieja** and **Calderería Nueva,** where wall hangings, pillows, silk tassels, and silver teapots abound. The area is a low-key version of what you'd find in North Africa, and a certain amount of bargaining is not only permitted—it's virtually expected.

Handicrafts stores virtually line the main shopping arteries, especially those centered on Puerta Real, including Gran Vía de Colón, Reyes Católicos, and Angel Ganivet. For the best selection of antiques stores, mainly selling furnishings of Andalucía, browse the shops along **Cuesta de Elvira.**

Entertainment & Nightlife

DRINKS & TAPAS

A good place to begin your night is along the Campo del Príncipe, where at least seven old-fashioned tapas bars do a rollicking business during the cool of the evening.

One of the most popular tapas bars in Granada is **El Agua Casa de Vinos,** Placeta de Algibe de Trillo 7 (✆ **95-822-43-56**), a well-maintained bar with an adjoining restaurant in a small garden in the heart of the Albaicín. Everyone agrees that the cooling nighttime breezes show off this convivial spot to its best advantage. Don't expect full-fledged platters; its strength is small-scale portions of cheeses, pâtés, and salads, which go especially well with glasses of wine and beer. An equally historic spot with a verdant patio loaded with plants and shrubs is **Pilar del Toro,** Calle Hospital de Santa Ana 12 (www.pilardeltoro.es; ✆ **95-822-54-70**), near the cathedral and the Plaza Nueva. An even larger competitor, **La Gran Taberna,** Plaza Nueva 12 (✆ **95-822-88-46**), is a modern and irreverent site that attracts coffee and wine tasters as well as lovers of sliced Serrano ham, fondues, and liqueurs.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

For traditional performances of the Gypsy style of flamenco, see **Sacromonte** (p. 307). For other traditional flamenco, try to visit the **Peña de Arte Flamenco La Platería ★**, Placeta Toqueros 7 (✆ **95-821-06-50**). The oldest flamenco enthusiasts' club in Spain opens to nonmembers on Thursday nights (Feb–July) to showcase rising stars of flamenco music and dance. The space feels a little like a church hall with a raised stage, but performances are authentic *flamenco puro,* as nurtured by aficionados. Admission is usually 8€.

CLUBS

If you eventually tire of bodega-crawling, you might be tempted as the night progresses to go dancing in the town's most popular disco, **Granada 10,** Calle Carcel Baja 10 (www.granada10.com; ✆ **95-822-41-26**), open Monday to Friday 12:30 to 5am, Saturday and Sunday 12:30 to 7am. A cover charge of 12€ includes the first drink.

At **El Camborio,** Camino del Sacromonte 48 (www.elcamborio.com; ✆ **95-822-12-15**), some of the best DJs in Granada spin music on the dance floors, including a rooftop patio with stunning nighttime panoramas of the Alhambra. A lively under-30 crowd of both locals and foreigners frequents the place. A cover charge of 8€ is charged only on Friday and Saturday nights. The club is open Tuesday to Saturday from 11pm until daybreak. You can either walk up from the Plaza Nueva in about 20 minutes, or catch a night bus (no. 31), which climbs the hill every night until 2am.

Industrial Copera, Paz 7, Carretera de la Armilla (www.industrialcopera.net; ✆ **95-825-84-49**), features a huge dance floor under pulsating, glowing lights. The DJs here are the best in town. Techno music is the main entertainment for the beautiful young people of Granada, who range in age here from late teens to early 30s. The club is open nightly from 10:30pm to 4am, charging 12€ to 20€ cover.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

AC Palacio de Santa Paula ★★★ One of Granada's grandest and most unusual hotels opened in 2001 behind the very large, sienna-colored facade of what had been built in the 19th century as Jerónimos Convent. Inside, you'll find one of the most imaginative combinations of modern and antique architecture in Spain, a brilliantly schizophrenic integration of buildings that incorporates a

15th-century medieval cloister, two 14th-century Muslim houses, a deconsecrated baroque chapel, and many high-ceilinged vestiges of Granada's Catholic Reconquista. All these structures are interlinked with a sophisticated, ultramodern shell of glass, steel, aluminum, and polished stone. Even the simplest units are hypermodern, soothing, comfortable, and well designed, with soundproof windows protecting sleepers from the busy traffic of the Gran Vía de Colón. Somewhat more upscale units and suites occupy the site of the Moorish houses and the cloister. Scattered throughout the premises are a half-dozen imaginative suites.

Gran Vía de Colón 31, 18001 Granada. www.palaciodesantapaula.com. ☎ **95-880-57-40.** Fax 95-880-57-41. 75 units. 120€–250€ double; 162€–278€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€ per day. Bus: 3, 6, 8, or 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (14€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Alhambra Palace Evoking a Moorish fortress complete with a crenellated roofline, a crowning dome, geometric tile work, and the suggestion of a minaret, this legendary Mudéjar Revival hotel is a good choice as long as you're careful not to get stuck in one of the tiny rooms and don't mind being up on the hill with the Alhambra. It was built by Duke San Pedro de Galatino in 1910 in a secluded spot just a 10-minute walk from the Alhambra. The private rooms don't always live up to the drama of the public areas. Most units are spacious and quite comfortable, but a few small ones dearly need renewal. Ask for one with a balcony opening onto a view of the city of Granada, but avoid the court rooms, whose windows lack double-glazing.

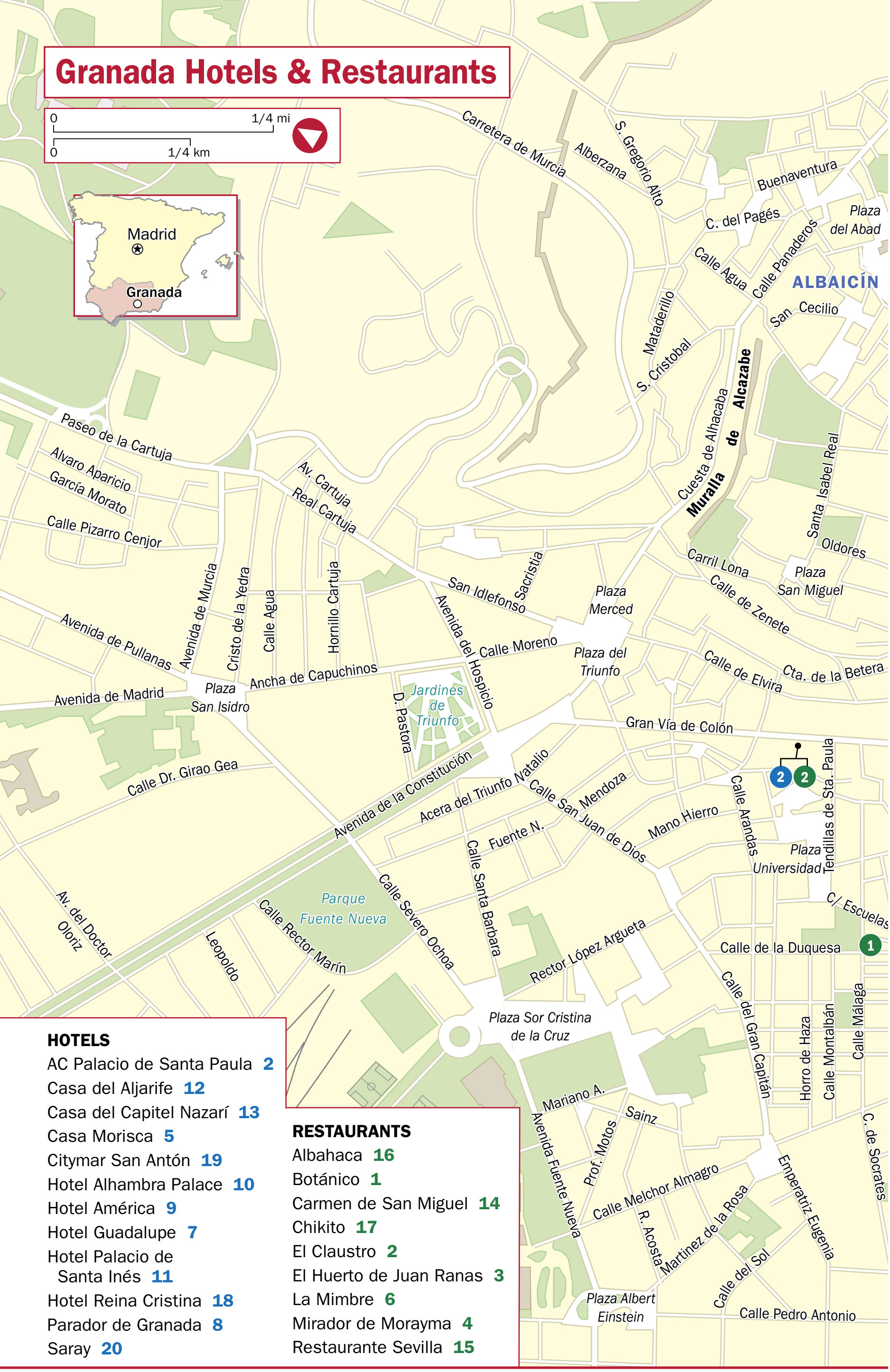
Plaza Arquitecto García de Paredes 1, 18009 Granada. www.h-alhambrapalace.es. ☎ **95-822-14-68.** Fax 95-822-64-04. 126 units. 135€–190€ double; from 190€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 30. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Granada ★★★ The most famous *parador* in Spain—and the hardest to get into—is within the grounds of the Alhambra. It's rich with Mudéjar- and Nasrid-inspired architectural touches, including splashing fountains, wraparound loggias, gardens laden with wisteria, and aromatic herbs. Unfortunately, it is consistently booked, so reserve as far as possible in advance. The decor is tasteful, and the rich Andalucían ambience evokes a lot of history. From the terrace you have views of the Generalife gardens and the Sacromonte caves. The guest rooms are roomy and comfortable. Ask for a unit in the older section, which is furnished with antiques; rooms in the more modern wing are less inspired.

Real de la Alhambra s/n, 18009 Granada. www.parador.es. ☎ **95-822-14-40.** Fax 95-822-22-64. 36 units. 320€–358€ double; 618€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 30. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Saray ★ This comfortable, well-run hotel near the Palacio de Congresos is about a 20-minute brisk walk south of the cathedral. It lacks a personal touch but compensates by offering larger rooms and more amenities on the property. The nine-floor horseshoe-shaped building has three exterior elevators (with views, if you're not prone to vertigo). Postmodern references to Granada's Moorish past include a garden, various mosaics, plaster fretwork, and fountains. Fine furnishings and the rare antique add grace notes to the public lounges. Plenty of mirrors, wooden furniture, overstuffed armchairs, and elegant fabrics enhance the luxe

Granada Hotels & Restaurants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Mataderillo
S. Cristobal
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Real Cartuja
San Idlefonso
Sacristía
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Avenida de Murcia
Cristo de la Yedra
Calle Agua
Hornillo Cartuja
Avenida del Hospicio
Calle Moreno
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Calle de Elvira
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Calle de la Duquesa
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Plaza Sor Cristina
de la Cruz
Horno de Haza
Calle Montalbán
Calle Málaga
Mariano A.
Sainz
Avenida Fuente Nueva
Prof. Motos
Calle Melchor Almagro
R. Acosta
Martínez de la Rosa
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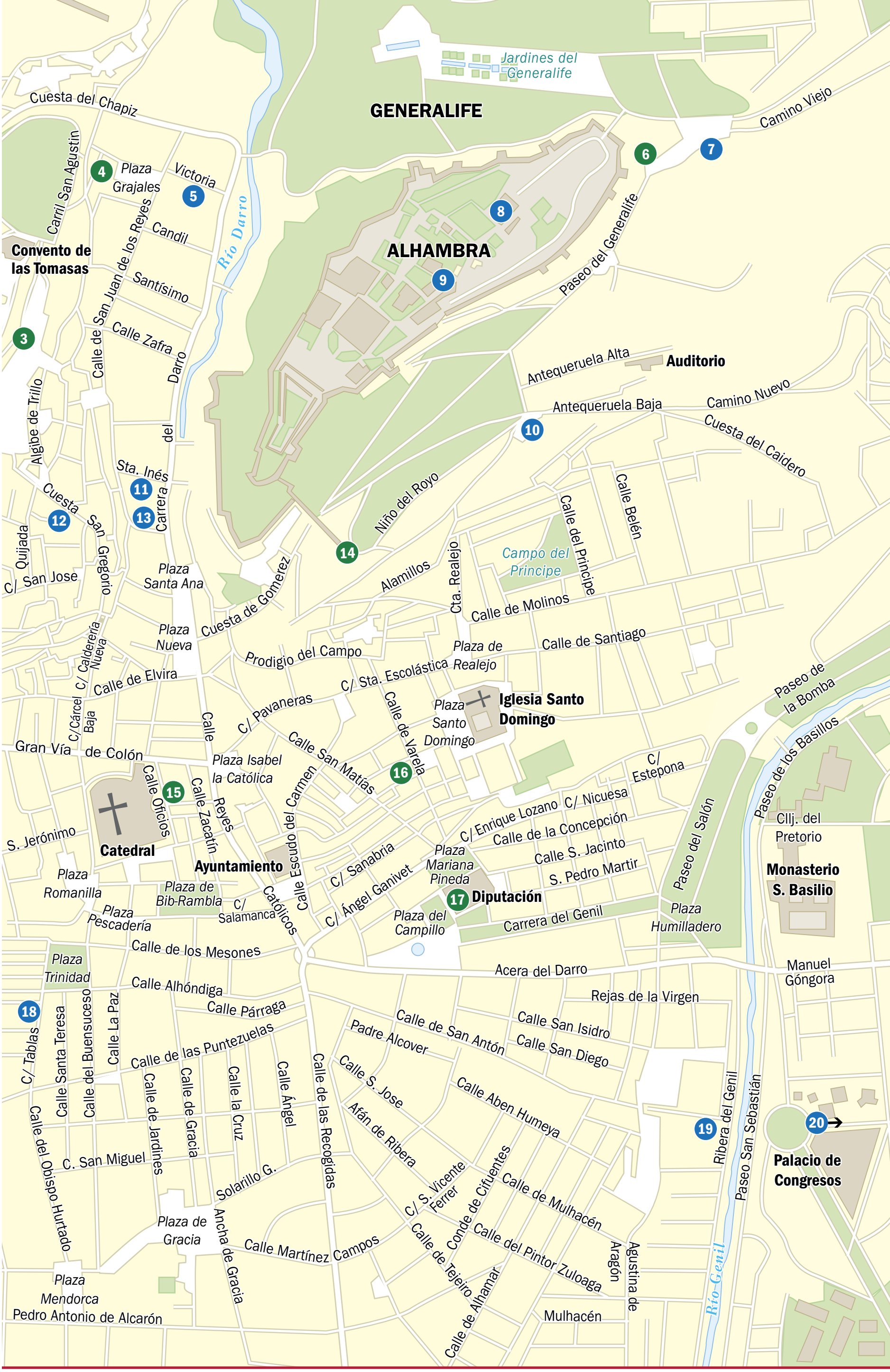
Jardines del Generalife
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Aragón
Agustina de
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Plaza Mendorca
Pedro Antonio de Alcarón
Calle de Alhamar
Mulhacén

touches throughout. Bedrooms are midsize to spacious, offering everything from bedside controls to mirrored closets, from double-glazed windows to tiled bathrooms. The alcove units have extra space.

Paseo de Enrique Tierno Galván, 18006 Granada. www.h-santos.es. ✆ **95-813-00-09.** Fax 95-812-91-61. 213 units. 90€–200€ double; from 300€ suite. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; cafe; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Casa Morisca ★★ 🎁 This little charmer is tucked away in a house from the late 15th century in the historic lower district of Albaicín at the foot of the Alhambra. In the patio you can still see the remains of a Moorish pool and galleries supported by pilasters and columns. The interior was kept and restored, although the facade was given a 17th-century overlay. Bedrooms are individually decorated in a Moorish decorator style with all modern comforts. Parking is available on the street out front but must be arranged ahead to get a permit to drive up Carrera del Darro.

Cuesta de la Victoria 9, 18010 Granada. www.hotelcasamorisca.com. ✆ **95-822-11-00.** Fax 95-821-57-96. 14 units. 86€–160€ double; 155€–215€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 31 or 32. **Amenities:** Room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Citymar San Antón Across the Río Genil from the Palacio de Congresos, this modern hotel caters primarily to commercial clients since it is about a 1-mile walk from the cathedral. Rising eight floors, it is a typical mid-20th-century boxy hotel with panoramic windows. Bedrooms—midsize for the most part—are well furnished with modern wooden pieces. When reserving, request units in the -01 or -03 series, as these are upper-floor chambers opening onto the Alhambra. Room rates can be exorbitant when the hotel is hosting a conference, but a real bargain during much of tourist season.

San Antón 74, 18005 Granada. www.hotelsanantongranada.com. ✆ **95-852-01-00.** Fax 95-852-19-45. 189 units. 80€–230€ double; 120€–270€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 18€. Bus: 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel América ★★ 🏷 This is one of only two hotels on the actual grounds of the Alhambra, the other being the much more expensive (and much better-accessorized) Parador de Granada (see above). Hotel América was built in the mid–19th century as a private home and then transformed in 1928 into the intimate, small-scale Victorian-era hotel you see today. There's a courtyard in back that's festooned with grapevines and dotted with blue-and-white ceramic tiles. Antiques, curios, and photos of past literati who have stayed here abound. Although small, the rooms are comfortably and decently furnished and well maintained. Since it is so much cheaper than the *parador,* its rooms fill quickly so reserve far ahead.

Real de la Alhambra 53, 18009 Granada. www.hotelamericagranada.com. ✆ **95-822-74-71.** Fax 95-822-74-70. 17 units. 81€–141€ double; 116€–151€ triple. MC, V. Nearby parking 15€. Bus: 30 or 32. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Palacio de Santa Inés ★★ This *casa antigua,* consisting of two small Mudéjar buildings constructed in the first third of the 16th century, is one of the most enchanting places to stay in Granada. It's in the colorful Albaicín district, about a 5-minute walk from the cathedral. The painstakingly restored little palace was in complete ruins until the mid-1990s. Today it's a lovely, graceful inn, even a bit luxe. A 16th-century courtyard, time-aged wood-beamed ceilings, and silver chandeliers take you back to yesterday. The rooms are medium size, some have small sitting rooms, and several open onto views of Granada. Much of the furniture is antique.

Cuesta de Santa Inés 9, 18010 Granada. www.palaciosantaines.com. ☎ **95-822-23-62.** Fax 95-822-12-64. 35 units. 60€–170€ double; 127€–250€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 19€. Bus: 30 or 32. **Amenities:** Concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Reina Cristina This family-operated hotel in a renovated 19th-century mansion called a *casa granadina* sits in the center of the city just a 3-minute walk from the cathedral. The hotel exudes grace, charm, and tranquillity, and the service is very helpful. All the small rooms have undergone extensive renovation, although the public areas retain many of the original furnishings from the days when it was a private home. The building did play a minor role in a dark event in Granada's history. Poet and playwright Federico García Lorca was staying here with a friend when Franco's men kidnapped him. He was never seen alive again and his body was never found.

Calle Tablas 4, 18002 Granada. www.hotelreinacristina.com. ☎ **95-825-32-11.** Fax 95-825-57-28. 58 units. 58€–153€ double; 73€–168€ triple. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Bus: 5. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Casa del Aljarife ★ 🎁 In the Albaicín district, 4 blocks from the Plaza Santa Ana, this little nugget is known only to a few discerning travelers. In a modernized 17th-century structure, it has a large patio with trees and a Moorish fountain with views of the Alhambra. The family-operated *casa* is welcoming and nicely maintained. Each medium-size or spacious room has a distinct, Andalucían style. Owner Christian Most is gracious, apologizing for the lack of luxuries by pointing out that "everything you need" is virtually outside the door.

Placeta de la Cruz Verde 2, 18010 Granada. www.casadelaljarife.com. ☎/fax **95-822-24-25.** 4 units. 95€ double; 120€ triple. MC, V. Nearby parking 20€. Bus: 3 or 33. *In room:* A/C.

Casa del Capitel Nazarí ★ 🏷 This is one of at least four boutique hotels that opened during the early millennium within the cramped but evocative medieval neighborhood known as the Albaicín, a few steps uphill from the Plaza Nueva. Situated within a private, patio-centered home built at least 400 years ago, and the beneficiary of a river of funds spent on renovations and modern comforts (like plumbing), it's a cozy, appealing mixture of antique and modern. The well-furnished if rather small bedrooms are accented with hand-hewn antiques, including wooden beams in the old Spanish style. Units spread over three floors are all accessed from the main courtyard.

Cuesta Aceituneros 6, 18010 Granada. www.hotelcasacapitel.com. ☎ **95-821-52-60.** Fax 95-821-58-06. 17 units. 85€–140€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 20€ per day. Bus: 31 or 32. **Amenities:** Cafe; Wi-Fi (free). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Guadalupe This building sits beside a road leading up to the Alhambra. Rising five floors, Hotel Guadalupe uses lots of marble and stonework to add architectural character. The single drawback of the Guadalupe is that tour bus companies tend to use it for their groups. Nonetheless, it remains one of the better choices in this price range, enhanced by its rustic arches, a beamed lobby, marble floors, and a fireplace. The better units lie within the hotel's main core, while the less desirable ones are in an annex a few yards away. Furnishings evoke a large, low-key country hotel.

Paseo de la Sabica s/n, 18009 Granada. www.hotelguadalupe.es. ✆ **95-822-34-23.** Fax 95-822-37-98. 58 units. 50€–115€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 30 or 32. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

A Side Trip to the Alupujarra de Granada

No place in Andalucía so retains its Moorish mien as the rustic mountain villages of Granada province on the south side of the Sierra Nevada. Isolated by bad roads until the 1950s, even the architecture echoes Berber houses in northern Morocco. The green valleys and rugged hills terraced with olives and vines are spectacularly scenic. Alas, the area is best explored by private auto; public transit is spotty. The drive is a treat for fans of twisting mountain roads.

LANJARÓN

The first town of the Alpujarra that comes up on A-348 is the least typical. Lanjarón is famous all over Spain for the water bottled from its springs, and it has been a spa town since the Romans. Eight mineral springs bubble up, each with different alleged healing properties. The town revolves around the spa, called the **Balneario de Lanjarón,** Av. Andalucía s/n (www.balneariodelanjaron.com; ✆ **95-877-01-37**). Twice a day residents and visitors line up in the lobby to fill bottles with water from a flowing spring. The spa makes a relaxing retreat, with services that range from thermal baths to massage and reflexology. The spa also arranges weeklong therapy programs with lodging and meals. The spa is open daily 9am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. Treatments range from 11€ to 56€.

PAMPANEIRA ★

The lowest spot in Pampaneira is 1,000m (3,281 ft.) above sea level, and every street leads steeply up from there. This village is the tourism and hiking center for the High Alpujarra, and alpine hikers strut up and down the streets with ease while tourists shuffle and pant between stops. There are a number of small shops vending colorful, shaggy, woven cotton rugs (called *jarapes de Alpujarra*) as well as jewelry and other handcrafts. Two ham producers also sell their wares, and the village even has an artisanal chocolate maker and a gelato outlet.

But the main reason to come here is to hike. Do *not* set out on a trail without first visiting **Punto de Información Parque Natural de Sierra Nevada,** Plaza de la Libertad s/n (www.nevadensis.com; ✆ **95-876-31-27**). The center is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Sunday to Monday 10am to 3pm, and offers guided hikes (25€–120€). The center also has interpretive displays about the Sierra Nevada park, sells trail guides and gear, and will arrange guides for ambitious excursions. Most important, staff can fill you in on exact current trail conditions. Hikers interested in a good afternoon excursion are usually encouraged to follow well-marked trails from Pampaneira to the nearby ridgeline villages of Bubión and Capileira. The distance is only about 3km (1.9 miles), with an elevation rise to 1,250m (4,101 ft.) on switchback trails. The last stretch to Capileira follows the asphalt road, as the historic trail is washed out. A more ambitious hike across the valley leads to a Zen Buddhist monastery.

If you want to stay overnight in the High Alpujarra, book ahead for the **Hostal Pampaneira,** Av. de la Alpujarra 1 (www.hostalpampaneira.com; ✆ **95-876-30-02**). All 15 cozy and simple rooms have televisions and heat—air-conditioning is never needed. The windows offer million-dollar views, but doubles are only 42€ per night with breakfast. Triples are 49€.

RONDA ★★

102km (63 miles) NE of Algeciras, 97km (60 miles) W of Málaga, 147km (91 miles) SE of Sevilla, 591km (367 miles) S of Madrid

This little town high in the Serranía de Ronda Mountains (698m/2,290 ft. above sea level) is one of the oldest and most aristocratic places in Spain. The main tourist attraction is a 150m (492-ft.) gorge, spanned by a Roman stone bridge, the Puente San Miguel, over the Guadelevín River. On both sides of this hole-in-the-earth are cliff-hanging houses, which look as if the slightest push will send them into the chasm.

Ronda is an incredible sight. The town and the surrounding mountains were legendary hide-outs for bandits and smugglers, but the Guardia Civil long ago put an end to that occupation. The once-difficult road here is now a wide highway with guardrails. **El Tajo (the Gorge)** divides the town into an older part, which is the Moorish and aristocratic quarter, and the newer section on the south bank of the gorge, built principally after the Reconquest. The Old Quarter is by far the more fascinating; it contains narrow, rough streets and buildings with a marked Moorish influence. (Look for the minaret.) Walking in the park in the new section, however, provides some truly extraordinary panoramic views.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Most visitors take a **train** to the main station at Avenida La Victoria (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**). Three trains arrive from Granada per day. The trip takes 2½ hours and costs 17€ one-way. Two trains daily connect Ronda and Madrid. The trip takes 4 hours and costs 67€ one-way.

The main **bus** station is at Plaza Concepción García Redondo s/n (✆ **90-225-70-25**). There are five buses a day from Sevilla, taking 2½ hours and costing 17€ one-way. There is also service from Málaga, taking 2½ hours and costing 15€ one-way. Also on the Costa del Sol, Marbella runs five buses per day to Ronda, taking 1 hour and costing 14€ one-way.

Major highways circle Ronda, but you'll have to take winding, circuitous, and secondary routes to drive into the town itself. From Sevilla, take N-334 southwest. When you reach the small town of El Arahal, continue south into Ronda along C-339. If you're in Granada, take N-342 west to the junction with N-332, and then take N-332 southwest to the junction with C-339, which eventually winds its way southeast into Ronda. If you're on the Costa del Sol, you can reach Ronda from Málaga traveling northwest via the scenic C-344, or from Marbella northwest on C-339.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Paseo de Blas Infante s/n (www.turismoderonda.es; ✆ **95-218-71-19**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

The Baños Árabes, or Arab Baths, of Ronda.

Exploring Ronda

The still-functioning **Baños Árabes ★** are reached from the turnoff to Puente San Miguel. Dating from the 13th century, the baths have glass-roof windows and hump-shaped cupolas. They're open Monday through Thursday 10am to 6pm (10am–7pm in summer), and Friday to Saturday 10am to 3pm. Admission is 3€, or 1.50€ for seniors and students.

Palacio de Mondragón ★, Plaza de Mondragón (✆ **95-287-84-50**), was once the 14th-century private home of the Moorish king, Abomelic. But after the Reconquista, it was renovated to receive King Fernando and Queen Isabel, who stayed here. Inside you can see a trio of courtyards and a collection of Moorish mosaics. There is also a beautiful carved wooden ceiling. A small museum houses artifacts devoted to regional archaeology. Better than the museum is the restored Mudéjar courtyard where you can take in a panoramic view of El Tajo with the Serranía de Ronda looming in the background. Flanked by two Mudéjar towers, the building now has a baroque facade. It's open Monday through Friday from 10am to 6pm (7pm in the summer), and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 3pm; admission is 3€, 1.50€ for seniors and students.

Nearby, the **Casa Palacio del Gigante,** Plaza del Gigante s/n (www.turismoderonda.es; ✆ **67-863-14-45**), was named for the Phoenician stone sculpture in the courtyard. Displays in this small in-town Nasrid palace from the 13th to 15th centuries race through Ronda's formation from the geological forces that created the gorge to the Iberian settlement of the city, the Roman occupation, and then the Moorish urban explosion of the 10th and 11th centuries that shaped the city you see today. Admission is 2€ adults, 1€ seniors and students.

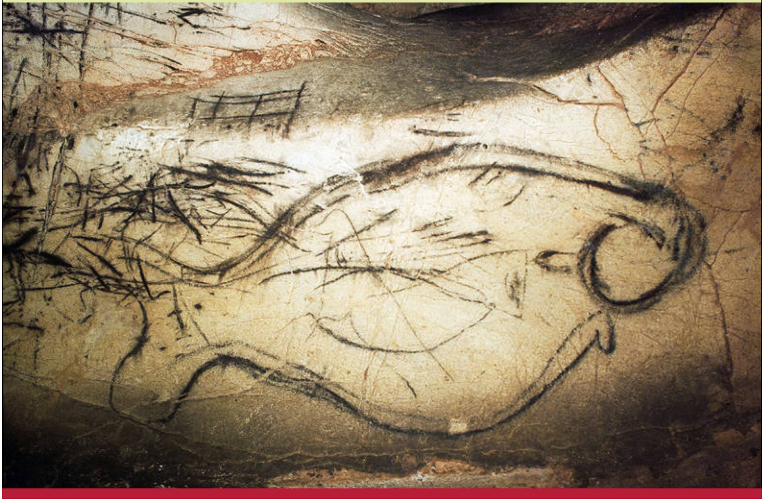
One of the great wonders of Ronda is not that the Romans built the first version of Puente San Miguel at the bottom of the gorge, but that the Puente Nuevo spans the gorge at the top. The **Centro de Interpretación del Puente**

prehistoric **CAVE PAINTINGS**

Near Benaoján, the **Cueva de la Pileta** ★ (www.cuevadelapileta.org; ✆ **95-216-73-43**), 25km (16 miles) southwest of Ronda, has been compared to the Caves of Altamira in northern Spain, where prehistoric paintings were discovered toward the end of the 19th century. In a wild area known as the Serranía de Ronda, José Bullón Lobato, grandfather of the present owners, discovered this cave in 1905. More than a mile in length and filled with oddly and beautifully shaped stalagmites and stalactites, the cave also contained five fossilized human skeletons and two animal skeletons.

In the mysterious darkness, **prehistoric paintings** depict animals in yellow, red, black, and ocher, as well as mysterious symbols. One of the highlights of the tour is a trip to the chamber of the fish, which contains a wall painting of a great black seal-like creature about 1m (3¼ ft.) long. This chamber, the innermost heart of the cave, ends in a precipice that drops vertically nearly 75m (246 ft.). In the valley just below the cave lives a guide who'll conduct you around the chambers, carrying artificial light to illuminate the paintings. (Tours are in English or Spanish.) Plan to spend at least an hour here. Tours are given daily from 10am to 1pm and 4 to 6pm (Nov to mid-Apr the last tour is at 5pm). Admission, including the hour-long tour, is 8€ adults, and 5€ children 5 to 12.

It's easiest to get here by car from Ronda, but you can also take the train to Benaoján. The cave, whose entrance is at least 6.5km (4 miles) uphill, is in the rocky foothills of the Sierra de Libar, midway between two tiny villages: Jimera de Libar and Benaoján. Ronda and the cave are in parallel valleys, separated by a steep range of hills. Reaching the cave requires a rather complicated detour to either the south or the north of Ronda, and then doubling back.



Nuevo, Plaza de España s/n (www.turismoderonda.es; ✆ **64-996-53-38**), tells how it came about. The citizenry successfully petitioned the crown for a new bridge in 1542, but 2 centuries passed before technology advanced enough to attempt it. The first bridge on this spot opened in 1739—and collapsed in 1741, killing 50 people. The current structure was begun in 1759 and finally inaugurated in 1793. The interpretation center is located inside the bridge's support structure. Exhibits provide an overview of Ronda's geography (El Tajo is 120m/394 ft. deep) and the engineering achievements necessary to construct the bridge. The center is open Monday through Friday 10am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 1:45pm and 3 to 6pm, and Sunday 10am to 3pm. Admission is 2€ adults, 1€ seniors and students, and free for those 13 and under.

Ronda has the oldest bullring in Spain. Built in 1785, the **Plaza de Toros** ★★ is the setting for the yearly Corrida Goyesca, in honor of Ronda native son Pedro Romero, one of the greatest bullfighters of all time. The matadors all dress in the 18th-century style as depicted by Goya's paintings. The bullring is a work of architectural beauty, built of limestone with double arches and 136 Tuscan-like columns. The town is still talking about the music video Madonna and entourage staged here in 1994. If you want to know more about Ronda bullfighting, head for the **Museo de la Tauromaquia,** Calle Virgen de la Paz (www.rmcr.org; ✆ **95-287-41-32**), reached through the ring. It's open daily March to October 10am to 8pm and November to February 10am to 6pm. Admission is 6€, or 5€ for seniors and students. Exhibits document the exploits of the noted Romero family. Francesco invented the killing sword and the *muleta,* and his grandson Pedro (1754–1839) killed 5,600 bulls during his 30-year career. Pedro was the inspiration for Goya's famous *Tauromaquia* series. There are also exhibits devoted to Cayetano Ordóñez, the matador immortalized by Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises.*

Where to Eat

Asador Casa Santa Pola ANDALUCÍAN Constructed in the 19th century but altered and rebuilt over the years, this *asador* (a restaurant that specializes in roasted meats) is located on the hillside in the Old City with striking views of the Ronda gorge. Three levels are built onto the mountainside; you enter on the top floor and step down through terraces to the others. True to its *asador* designation, many of the dishes are cooked in the traditional brick oven, including the predictable *rabo de toro* (roast oxtail) and *lomo asado* (beef loin roast). But the chefs here stay very up-to-date, so you'll also find that the suckling pig is slow-cooked *sous vide* (in a pouch in sub-boiling water) before being finished in the superhot oven to crisp the skin. Game dishes are also popular, including a delicious version of roasted partridge with confit leg and butter beans. Desserts are homemade and traditional to the area. Anticipate unexpected closings on at least 1 day a week (it could vary, perhaps Mon or Tues).

Cuesta Santo Domingo 3. ✆ **95-287-92-08.** Main courses 18€–28€; fixed-price menu 38€–60€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–5pm and 7:30–11pm.

Restaurante Pedro Romero ANDALUCÍAN Named after the legendary bullfighter, this restaurant attracts aficionados of that sport. It's opposite the bullring and on bullfighting days it's almost impossible to get a table. While seated under a stuffed bull's head, surrounded by photographs of young matadors, you might begin your meal with the classic garlic soup, and then follow with a well-prepared array of meat or poultry dishes. *Rabo de toro,* anyone?

Virgen de la Paz 18. www.rpedroromero.com. ✆ **95-287-11-10.** Reservations required on day of *corrida* and Fri–Sat. Main courses 17€–23€; *menú del día* 18€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4pm and 7:30–11pm. Closed Sun night and Mon June–Aug.

Tragabuches ★★★ ANDALUCÍAN Consistently one of the top half-dozen gastronomic destinations in Spain, Tragabuches brings new life to the Andalucían palate. The restaurant is a study in minimalism—all open and airy—yet it is unmistakably Andalucían in its contrast of whitewashed walls with buff-colored stone. So, too, is the cuisine. Gazpacho assumes a thousand new identities here, often finished with lightly roasted pistachio nuts and chopped tart cherries. Instead of a sorbet between courses, you might get a surprisingly effective beer ice cream. Every dish has an antecedent in Andalucían cooking, but may not look so familiar when it arrives. While desserts are not usually a strength of the Andalcían table, they are here. Each is a plated piece of art, inevitably combining salt and sweet with every bite. Most diners opt for the 12-course tasting menu.

José Aparicio 1 (btw. Plaza de España and Plaza de Toros). www.tragabuches.com. ✆ **95-219-02-91.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 24€–36€; gastronomic tasting menu 200€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun 1:30–3:30pm; Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm. Closed early Jan to mid-Mar.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

Parador de Ronda ★★★ Behind its historic facade, this *parador* is an entirely new structure holding down the most dramatic spot in town and featuring the grandest rooms for miles around. The *parador* perches above the fantastic gorge (El Tajo) that cuts a swath more than 150m (492 ft.) deep and 90m (295 ft.) wide through the center of this mountain town. Stretching along the edge of the gorge to the Puente Nuevo, the *parador* is surrounded by a footpath with scenic views of the gorge and the Guadalevín River below. Designed by two distinctly different Spanish avant-garde designers, the large rooms are impeccably furnished; many open onto balconies with views of the peaks surrounding Ronda.

Plaza de España s/n, 29400 Ronda. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-287-75-00.** Fax 95-287-81-88. 78 units. 90€–185€ double; 210€–230€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar (in some), Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Husa Reina Victoria ★ On the eastern periphery of the new town, this country-style hotel dates from 1906, when it was built by an Englishman in honor of Queen Victoria. It's near the bullring and has terraces that hang right over a 147m (482-ft.) precipice. Hemingway frequently visited, but the Reina Victoria is known best as the place where poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote *The Spanish Trilogy.* His third-floor room has been set aside as a museum with first editions, manuscripts, photographs, and even a framed copy of his hotel bill. The hotel's gardens and terraces have an enduring appeal, as does the Victorian architecture with towering chimneys and sloping roofs. The rooms are big and airy, some with living rooms and many with private terraces.

Paseo Doctor Fleming 25, 29400 Ronda. www.hotelhusareinavictoriaronda.com. ✆ **95-287-12-40.** Fax 95-287-10-75. 89 units. 65€–140€ double; 155€–180€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Don Miguel ★ From the narrow street leading to it, this hotel presents a severely dignified white facade very similar to that of its neighbors. From the back, however, some of its rooms look out over the river gorge of a steep ravine. Set a few steps east of the Plaza de España, and composed of several interconnected houses, it offers a vine-strewn patio above the river, a modernized interior accented with exposed brick and varnished pine, and renovated and comfortable small rooms. Overflow guests are housed in a building (no. 13) across the street. Rooms here have the same dramatic views and are comparable to those in the main building.

Calle Villanueva 4, 29400 Ronda. www.dmiguel.com. ✆ **95-287-77-22.** Fax 95-287-83-77. 30 units. 91€–108€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel San Gabriel ★★ 🎁 This charming 1736 mansion—also called Su Casa en Ronda—stands in the historic core a 5-minute walk from the gorge. The building was painstakingly renovated by the owner and his sons and daughter, who give guests Ronda's warmest welcome. Inside, all is stylish and homelike, filled with antiques, stained-glass windows, a Spanish-style billiards table, a *cine* salon (with seats taken from the city's old theater), and even an old library. Each room is spacious and well appointed, all with exterior views and individual decoration. Try for no. 15, a cozy top-floor nest on two levels.

Marqués de Moctezuma 19 (just off Calle Armiñán), 29400 Ronda. www.hotelsangabriel.com. ✆ **95-219-03-92.** Fax 95-219-01-17. 16 units. 88€–98€ double; 115€–150€ suite. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan 1–9, July 19–31, and Dec 21–31. Parking 9€. **Amenities:** Bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

La Rondeña 🏷 A 2-minute walk from the gorge and next to the Plaza de Toros (the bullring), this two-story family-style house attracts bargain hunters. The small bedrooms are relatively simple but comfortable—however, at these prices, you can't expect dramatic views of the gorge. Rooms do open onto the landscaped grounds and the Sierras in the distance. Every nook and cranny of the public areas has been decorated in a typical Andalucían style. The on-site **restaurant** offers typical dishes from the mountains of Ronda. Tables are placed on a covered terrace where live music can sometimes be heard. The hotel lies between Puente Nuevo and Paseo de Blas Infante gardens.

José Aparicio 3, 29400 Ronda. ✆ **95-287-34-88.** Fax 95-287-99-03. 16 units. 80€–300€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Maestranza 🏷 This modern hotel grew up on the site of a villa once inhabited by the legendary matador Pedro Romero. In the center of town, it faces Ronda's bullring. Today all traces of the former villa are gone. In its place is one of the best and most contemporary hotels in town. The bedrooms are small to midsize, but have been designed for comfort, with modern furnishings, carpets, and draperies. The public rooms are tastefully furnished, and the helpful staff provides excellent service. Clients can use the facilities of a private country club nearby, with a swimming pool and tennis courts.

Calle Virgen de la Paz 24, 29400 Ronda. www.hotelmaestranza.com. ✆ **95-218-70-72.** Fax 95-219-01-70. 54 units. 70€–115€ double; 110€–147€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

THE PUEBLOS BLANCOS

120km (75 miles) N of Algeciras, 160km (100 miles) W of Málaga, 96km (60 miles) S of Sevilla, 630km (391 miles) S of Madrid

The brilliantly whitewashed villages and towns of inland southwestern Andalucía are called Pueblos Blancos (White Towns) because they cling to their mountaintops like flocks of white birds roosting together. These are archetypal towns and villages that dot the steep slopes of the mountains, which extend north of Gibraltar. They occupy that part of Andalucía that lies between the Atlantic in the west and the Mediterranean extending eastward. One of the most traveled routes through the towns is the road that stretches from Arcos de la Frontera on the west all the way to Ronda in the east.

Many towns have "de la Frontera" as part of their name, an ancient reference to the frontier towns that formed a boundary between Christian-held territories and Muslim towns and villages in the Middle Ages. Although the Catholic troops eventually triumphed, it is often the Moorish influence that makes these towns architecturally interesting, with their labyrinths of narrow, cobblestone streets, their fortresslike walls, and their little whitewashed houses with the characteristic wrought-iron grilles.

The drive outlined below passes by some of the great scenic landscapes of Spain, various thickly wooded areas that are often the home to some rare botanical species, including the Spanish fir, *Abies pinsap,* which grows in only four locations at more than 1,000m (3,281 ft.). As you drive along you'll approach limestone slopes that rise as high as 6,640m (21,785 ft.). Castle ruins and old church bell towers also form part of the landscape. For those who have been across the sea to North Africa, much of the landscape of the Pueblos Blancos will evoke the Berber villages of Morocco. The white towns sprawl across the provinces of Cádiz and Málaga, lying east of Sevilla.

The drive is not difficult, but the roads do twist and turn. At points, they climb very steeply to high mountain passes—some of the highest in southern Europe. In practice, this makes the scenic aspect of the drive better for passengers than for the driver, who should rivet attention on the roadway itself. If you need to drink in the panoramas, pull over to the side.

The ideal time to drive through the Pueblos Blancos is spring, when the wildflowers in the valleys burst into bloom. Fall is also good. Allow at least a day for Ronda, covered in detail on p. 319. You can pass through the other villages on this tour, admiring the life and the architecture, and then moving on. The best hotels and restaurants along the entire stretch of the Pueblos Blancos are found in Ronda and Arcos de la Frontera. Elsewhere, lodging options and restaurants are very limited, although we have included some recommendations along the way.

These whitewashed villages are fairly close together, so driving times, as indicated below, are short. From Sevilla, you can begin your tour by heading to the Pueblos Blancos along A-4, which becomes N-IV. Continue southeast along N-IV until you come to the turnoff for C-343. At this point, our first stopover on the tour, Arcos de la Frontera, will be signposted. Follow C-343 south into Arcos de la Frontera. The first part of the tour from Arcos to Ronda can be done in 1 day, with an overnight in Ronda.

The second part of the tour, from Ronda to Jerez de la Frontera in the west, can also be done in a day. However, those with more time can extend this tour to

3 or 4 days. In the towns along the way, we have recommended the best places to stay and dine: If you find a place that enchants you and your schedule allows it, you can stop over rather than pressing on to Ronda.

Arcos de la Frontera ★

Along with Ronda, this old Arabic town is a highlight of the Pueblos Blancos and the center of the best inns along the route. Now a National Historic Monument, Arcos de la Frontera lies along the long slope rising to a sheer cliff. The major attraction here is the village itself, with its Renaissance palaces squeezed onto a medieval Muslim street plan. Wander at leisure and don't worry about skipping a particular monument. Nearly all that interests the casual visitor will be found in the elevated **Medina (Old Town) ★★**, which towers over the flatlands. The Old Town gathers around the crenellated castle walls. Unless you are staying at the *parador* and driving a small vehicle, park your car below and walk up until you reach the site built on a crag overlooking a loop in the Guadalete River.

At the main square, **Plaza del Cabildo ★**, you can pick up a map at the **tourist office** (www.arcosdelafrontera.es; ✆ **95-670-22-64**), open Monday to Friday 10am to 2:30pm and 4 to 7pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:30am to 1:30pm. Start your visit at the **Balcón de Arcos,** at the same square. Don't miss the **view ★** from this rectangular esplanade overhanging a deep river cleft. You can see the exterior of a Moorish-era castle, but it's privately owned and not open to the public. The main church on this square is **Santa María de la Asunción,** a 13th-century church built atop a mosque that was constructed on the foundations of a 7th-century Latin-Byzantine church. The current facade was last made over in 1732 and bears a blend of Renaissance, Gothic, and baroque styles. The

The hilltop town of Arcos de la Frontera.

western facade ★, in the Plateresque style, is its most stunning achievement. The interior is a mix of many styles—Plateresque, Gothic, Mudéjar, and baroque. Look for the beautiful star vaulting and a late Renaissance altarpiece. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm. Admission is 1.50€.

Down the main street heading out of Plaza del Cabildo is **Iglesia de San Pedro,** with its baroque bell tower. It is on the other side of the cliff and approached through a charming maze of narrow alleys. You can climb the tower, but it has few guardrails and is therefore not for those with vertigo. Paintings here include *Dolorosa* by Pacheco, the tutor of the great Velázquez, and works by Zurbarán and Ribera. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10:30am to 2pm. Admission is 1€. Continue down Calle Escribianos to the **Convento de las Mercederías,** where the cloistered nuns sell almond cookies at a revolving window in the wall (a *retorno*) weekdays from 10am to 2pm.

WHERE TO EAT

Bar Alcaraván ANDALUCÍAN Far more casual than other dining options, the vaulted rooms of this atmospheric bar were carved from the cellars of palaces on the plaza above. The food is hearty and lusty—just the thing to match the rough local red wines. Best bets are spicy local sausages or stewed pork or chicken casseroles. Local flamenco artists often perform in the evenings.

Calle Nueva 1. ✆ **95-670-33-97.** *Raciones* 4€–8€ (split 3 btw. 2 people). MC, V. Daily 1–5pm and 8pm–midnight.

Restaurante El Lago ANDALUCÍAN This reliable restaurant serves the bus tours, in part because it's out on the highway instead of actually in the city. The kitchen is very traditional, but the food is good if simple. A dish typical of the area is roast lamb heavily flavored with garlic and fresh herbs. Another good bet is the casserole of fresh tomatoes and paper-thin slices of Jabugo ham. The home-baked bread is fresh and aromatic, and the soups are filling and tasty. Despite the highway setting, the restaurant affects a rustic look with wooden columns, heavy furniture, and whitewashed walls. The service is friendly, efficient, and welcoming.

Carretera A-382 Este, Km 28.5. www.hotelellago.es. ✆ **95-670-11-17.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 11€–21€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–5pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed Sun June–Aug.

WHERE TO STAY

Cortijo Fain ★ ☺ Good for drivers, this 17th-century farmhouse has been turned into a farmhouse hotel lying 3km (1¾ miles) southeast of Arcos near the hamlet of Algar (reached via CA-52). Draped with purple bougainvillea, the house is warm and inviting with arches, white walls, a stone footpath, and Andalucían courtyards. The inn offers large bedrooms that are comfortably and rather charmingly furnished. The setting is in a vast olive grove, and the inn has a swimming pool and a library. You can explore the countryside on a horseback ride arranged by the inn.

Carretera Arcos-Algar, Km 3, 11630 Arcos de la Frontera. ✆ **95-670-41-31.** Fax 95-671-79-32. 9 units. 93€–121€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; children's center; concierge; 18-hole golf course; outdoor pool; room service; spa; outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel El Convento Near Santa María church, this was originally a portion of the Convento Las Mercedarías, but was turned into an inn in 1987 and has been renovated several times since. The hotel is reached via a tiny cobblestone alleyway in back of the Parador Casa del Corregidor (see below). The hotel is a snug nest done up in classic style, with a red-tile roof and wrought-iron grilles. It is furnished with rustic wooden pieces and is beautifully maintained. Its bedrooms are midsize, inviting, and comfortable enough to make you want to linger.

Maldonado 2, 11630 Arcos de la Frontera. www.hotelelconvento.es. ✆ **95-670-23-33.** Fax 95-670-41-28. 11 units. 75€–90€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€ nearby. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Marqués de Torresoto At the center of Arcos, at the landmark Plaza del Cabildo, this is a converted palace dating from the 17th century, with its original chapel still intact. The private family home, built by local nobleman Marqués de Torresoto, was turned into a hotel in 1994. It is graced with interior patios, corridors, columns, and arches in the typical Andalucían style. Rooms, mostly small, are a bit minimalist, evocative of a monastery, with white walls and wooden furniture.

Marqués de Torresoto 4, 11630 Arcos de la Frontera. www.hotelmarquesdetorresoto.com. ✆ **95-670-07-17.** Fax 95-670-42-05. 15 units. 60€–100€ double; 90€–130€ suite. MC, V. Parking 5€ nearby. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Parador Casa del Corregidor ★★ In the old part of the city on the Plaza del Cabildo, this is the kind of first-class place that's more typical of Ronda than of the other Pueblos Blancos. Originally the house of the *corregidor* (king's magistrate), it dates from the 18th century. From its balconies are panoramic views of the Guadalete River and the plains and farms beyond. Evocative of a chalet, the inn rises three floors with outside corridors, wooden columns, and a big terrace with a vista. The midsize bedrooms are traditionally and comfortably furnished, matching the style of the house. Many open onto views, and each comes with a small, tiled bathroom. The best and biggest rooms, however, open onto the plaza. The on-site restaurant serves dishes typical of the Sierra region (there's that oxtail again), but there are many other good options, including pork in a red-wine and fresh tomato sauce.

Plaza del Cabildo s/n, 11630 Arcos de la Frontera. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-670-05-00.** Fax 95-670-11-16. 24 units. 120€–180€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking on plaza. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar (in some); Wi-Fi (free).

Zahara de la Sierra ★

From Arcos de la Frontera, take the A-383 northeast, following the signs to Algodonales, a village best known for **Fly Spain,** Calle Sierra 41 (www.flyspain.co.uk; ✆ **65-173-67-18**), a first-rate paragliding center. Once you reach this town, head south at the junction with CA-531 to Zahara de la Sierra, the most perfect of the province's fortified hilltop *pueblos*. Trip time from Arcos is about 35 minutes, and the distance is 51km (32 miles).

Zahara lies in the heart of the **Natural Park Sierra de Grazalema ★★**, a 50,590-hectare (125,000-acre) park. An important reserve for griffon vultures, among other creatures, the park is studded with pine trees and oak forests. The

Zahara de la Sierra, as seen from afar.

Parque Natural Information Office (www.zaharadelasierra.es; ✆ **95-612-31-14**) lies at Calle San Juan (the eastern end of the main street). Hours are daily from 9am to 2pm and Monday to Saturday from 4 to 7pm. It dispenses information and maps for those who'd like to hike in the park. There are five major routes, and for most you'll need to seek permission at the office, which also organizes horseback riding, canoeing, and bike trips. If you're planning to visit Jimena (p. 335), you should also pick up information about Parque Natural de Los Alcornocales.

The white village of Zahara itself zigzags up the foot of a rock topped by a reconstructed *castillo*. Houses covered in characteristic red tiles huddle up to the ruined castle. Count on a 15- to 20-minute climb to reach what was once a 10th-century Muslim fortress constructed on Roman foundations 511m (1,677 ft.) above sea level. You can visit the Moorish castle, which is always open during daylight hours and offers **panoramic views ★** of the surrounding countryside.

The cobbled main street, Calle San Juan, links the two most important churches, **Iglesia San Juan** and **Iglesia Santa María de la Mesa.** The latter is an 18th-century baroque church worth a look inside (if it's open). It displays an impressive *retablo* with a 16th-century image of the Madonna. The best time to be here is in June for the Corpus Christi celebration (annual dates vary). Streets and walls seem to disappear under a mass of flowers and greenery.

It's worth taking a detour south of town on the CA-9104, also known as the Carretera de Grazalema, to cross the mountains at **Puerta de Las Palomas** (**Pass of the Doves,** p. 247). The way through the mountains stands at an elevation of 1,356m (4,450 ft.), and the switchback road is a sports-car driver's dream.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Arco de la Villa This rural inn is a rustic stone house resting under a low roof and set near a promontory in front of the castle. It's modern and minimally decorated with whitewashed walls and light wooden furnishings. It's a safe, well-maintained nest that, despite its modesty, is the best place to stay in Zahara. Bedrooms are small and simply but comfortably furnished, with little tile bathrooms with tub/shower combos. A reasonably good meal, costing 25€, is served in the on-site restaurant if you're just passing through Zahara and need lunch. You can dine even more modestly at the cafeteria.

Paseo Nazarí s/n, 11688 Zahara de la Sierra. ✆ **95-612-32-30.** Fax 95-612-32-44. 17 units. 66€ double. DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Los Tadeos This inn, launched at the beginning of the 21st century, is a family-run business that's located in a two-story structure about a mile outside of town near the municipal swimming pool at the foot of the hill. Its restaurant is more popular than its hotel rooms. Tables are placed on the terrace, and the food is typically Andalucían and budget priced, depending on the menu featured that day (fixed-price menus 12€–25€). Bedrooms are comfortable but small, each with a little tiled bathroom with tub and shower. They're decorated rustically, soberly, and simply. The best, and the most expensive, open onto private balconies with views.

Paseo de la Fuente, 11688 Zahara de la Sierra. ✆ **95-612-30-86.** 10 units. 50€–55€ double. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Marqués de Zahara This rural inn is a 17th-century structure, a former private home that has been converted to receive guests on its three floors. The location is central to the old upper town, and the decoration is very rustic with heavy curtains and dark colors. Furnishings have seen better days, but they're comfortable enough for a night. Each of the small rooms comes with a shower-only bathroom, and the most expensive doubles contain private balconies overlooking the main street. The handsomest feature is an attractive courtyard and delightful bar and dining room, where even nonguests can enjoy regional meals usually costing under 20€.

Calle San Juan 3, 11688 Zahara de la Sierra. www.marquesdezahara.com. ✆ **95-612-30-61.** Fax 95-612-32-68. 10 units. 55€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Olvera

From Zahara, return to CA-531 and follow the signs north to A-382. Once on A-382, head northeast to the village of Olvera. The distance between towns is only 24km (15 miles), usually taking only 15 minutes.

Olvera's two chief monuments are its castle and its cathedral, but even better is the view of the town and surrounding countryside. Olvera comes at you like an explosion of little whitewashed houses tumbling down a hill crowned by the twin towers of its church and ancient castle. Climb the hill by walking up the town's long main street.

In the town's Muslim heyday, **El Castillo de Olvera,** Plaza de la Iglesia 3, was one of the most impregnable fortresses in Andalucía. But even such a mighty bastion fell to the troops of King Alfonso XI in 1327. After the citadel was conquered, the castle and the surrounding village became part of the feudal estate of Pérez de Guzmán, a local nobleman. As late as the 19th century, the castle was still in private hands, the home of the dukes of Osuna. The castle is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10:30am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm. Admission is 3€, and tickets can be purchased at the tourist office.

The village is known for its handicrafts, and you can see little shops on the narrow streets selling esparto and other hand-woven straw products. Foodies may want to stock up on Olvera's pure virgin olive oil, which is among the most peppery in Andalucía.

The **Oficina de Turismo,** Plaza del Ayuntamiento 1 (www.olvera.es; ✆ **95-613-00-11**), has what little information is needed. Hours are Tuesday to Sunday from 10:30am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm. It's open at other times as well, so check locally.

WHERE TO EAT

Lirios ANDALUCÍAN In front of the local hospital in the newer part of town, this is one of the best places for regional Andalucían platters. Typical of the area is a casserole made from locally grown asparagus. They also do a peppery baked veal that's quite tasty, as is their garlic-studded, perfectly roasted suckling pig. Though the restaurant is located inland, the kitchen manages to get fresh fish. Often it is served *a la sal,* which means it was roasted in a coating of salt, the skin removed at the last minute. The salt coating seals in the juices. Desserts are rather standard.

Av. Julián Besteiro 54. ✆ **95-613-03-75.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–22€; fixed-price menus 15€–50€. DC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 9am–midnight.

Restaurante Las Murallas ★ ANDALUCÍAN This rustically decorated restaurant in the Hotel Sierra y Cal (see below) serves some of the best meals in the area. It is open to nonguests as well, most of whom are passing through Olvera for the day and stopping for lunch. It takes market-fresh ingredients and with a minimum of artifice transforms them into flavorful dishes. Start, perhaps, with the house specialty, a bowl of *pega con bolos,* asparagus soup with homemade bread. An enticing fish dish is local trout in a sauce made with fresh prawns and ham. (The southernmost trout streams in Europe are in this area.) Diners will delight in a tender and juicy sirloin of beef prepared with sausages.

Av. Nuestra Señora de los Remedios 2. www.tugasa.com. ✆ **95-613-05-42.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 11€–23€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel-Mesón Fuente del Pino This large two-story house at the entrance to town became a hotel in 1992 and was last renovated in 2006. Extravagantly decorated in its public rooms, it is imbued with a real Andalucían aura with its flowery curtains, local tiles, wooden furniture, and whitewashed walls. Bedrooms are small and simply furnished.

Av. Julián Besteiro s/n, 11690 Olvera. ✆ **95-613-02-32.** Fax 95-613-13-99. 32 units. 50€–65€ double. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Sierra y Cal Near Parque Entre Caminos, a 10-minute walk from the center, this large two-story hotel has been going strong since 1989. Rooms are small and fairly standard, but are well maintained and comfortable. Expect tile floors, iron frames, and whitewashed walls. There is a tea salon plus a terrace with a view.

Av. Nuestra Señora de los Remedios 2, 11690 Olvera. www.tugasa.com. ✆ **95-613-03-03.** Fax 95-613-05-83. 34 units. 59€ double; 85€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV.

BAR CAFETERIA
ZALIZON

The town of Setenil, set into the rock.

Setenil de las Bodegas ★

From Olvera, follow the signs to CA-4222, which will take you southeast to Setenil de las Bodegas. This winding road stretches for 13km (8 miles), taking you by olive groves and farming valleys. You'll pass through the town of **Torre Alhaquime** after 4km (2½ miles). Allow 15 to 30 minutes for this trip.

Setenil is one of the most bizarre of the Pueblos Blancos. The Río Trejo carved itself through the tufa rock to make room for the town, which is literally crammed into clefs of rock, its cavelike streets formed from the overhanging ledge of a gorge. Houses rise two or three floors, using the natural rock as their roofs. One street is actually a tunnel.

Other than the town itself, there are no specific attractions. The 16th-century Gothic church, **Iglesia La Encarnación,** stands on a rock in the center of the village next to an Arab tower, and the ruins of a **Muslim castle** are nearby. Another building, the **Ayuntamiento (town hall),** boasts a magnificent Mudéjar *artesonado* ceiling. **Calle Herreria** is the oldest street in town, its houses wedged into the massive rock.

Chances are you'll press on and not spend the night. However, if you do, there is one place to stay, the **Hotel El Almendral,** Setenil de Las Bodegas, 11692 (www.tugasa.com; ✆ **95-613-40-29;** fax 95-613-44-44). This is a little *pensión* (boardinghouse) nestled under rock ridges. The 28 small rooms are simply furnished with wooden pieces, including decent beds. The on-site restaurant serves simple meals. The hotel charges 59€ for a double room.

Grazalema ★

To reach Ronda (p. 319), the capital of the Pueblos Blancos, return to CA-4222 from Setenil and head southeast, following the signs. The route will become CA-4211 as you continue south by the town of Arriate and then change to MA-428, which takes you into Ronda. In all, this is a distance of only 18km (11 miles), taking about 15 to 20 minutes. Spend at least 1 night in Ronda before continuing the driving tour into Grazalema the next day by taking A-376 northwest. At the junction with A-372, follow signs southwest to Grazalema. Travel time for the 33km (21-mile) drive is about a half-hour. You could end your tour in Ronda, if you feel you're going blind from seeing too many white villages glistening in the bright Andalucían sun, but Grazalema is the whitest of the white towns—perhaps a *pueblo blanquísimo* (extraordinarily white town). This charming village nestles under the peak of San Cristóbal at 1,525m (5,003 ft.). As you wander its sloping, narrow streets, you'll pass house after house filled with summery flowers.

Towering limestone crags overlook the town, which nestles in a damp valley. (Grazalema has the highest annual rainfall in Spain.) For the best panoramic view, climb to a belvedere near the 18th-century chapel of San José. The town has two beautiful old churches, **Iglesia de la Aurora,** on Plaza de España, and the nearby **Iglesia de la Encarnación.** Both date from the 17th century.

Grazalema is also known for its local crafts, especially hand-woven pure wool blankets and rugs. A 5-minute walk from Plaza de España is **Artesanía Textil de Grazalema,** Carretera de Ronda (✆ **95-613-20-08**). At this small factory, open to the public, you can buy blankets and ponchos that are made from local wool using hand-operated looms and antique machinery. It also sells souvenirs, handicrafts, and traditional gifts. It's open Monday to Friday from 8am to 2pm and 3 to 6:30pm (closed Aug).

The town is also one of the best centers for exploring the **Parque Natural** of the Sierra de Grazalema. For information—including about walks in the park and horseback riding—go to the Conservación del Parque Natural, Av. de la Diputación s/n (✆ **95-670-97-03**). This office is in El Bosque, 20km (12½ miles) west of Grazalema.

WHERE TO EAT

Cádiz El Chico ANDALUCÍAN The best restaurant in town stands right on the main square. In an antique building, it's typically decorated, even using blankets made locally. The simplified classic cuisine is inexpensive and good. There are some unusual dishes on the menu, notably *tagarnina* soup (made with a wild green in the chicory family). Shoulder of lamb is studded with garlic and slow-roasted over a wood fire. Roasted venison is another signature dish, most often served in a red-wine sauce. Of course, you'll also find that Andalucían favorite, oxtail. Desserts are simple.

Plaza de España 8. ✆ **95-613-20-27.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 7€–19€; fixed-price menu 14€. AE, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

Casa de las Piedras ANDALUCÍAN Sit at wooden tables on wooden chairs beneath ceilings with exposed pine beams and revel in all that is rustic. Perhaps you'll begin with *Grazalema* (tomato) soup and follow with the delicious shredded veal with vegetables. Sea bass is perfectly sautéed and served with a mass of home-cut french fries. A signature dish is roast wild boar infused with warm spices like cinnamon and turmeric. Prices are extremely reasonable considering the quality and generous portions.

Las Piedras 32. www.casadelaspiedras.net. ✆ **95-613-20-14.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 8€–22€; fixed-price menu 11€. DC, MC, V. Sept–June Tues–Sun 1:30–3:30pm and 7:30–10pm; July–Aug daily 1:30–3:30pm and 7:30–10pm.

WHERE TO STAY

Casa de las Piedras The building housing this inn dates from the 19th century. It stands on one of the oldest streets of the little town, only 50m (164 ft.) from the central square. It is a traditional Andalucían house spread across two floors. The bedrooms are small and simple yet with a certain comfort, containing whitewashed walls, small lamps, a desk, and heavy wooden beds. The hotel's dining room is one of the best in town (see above).

Las Piedras 32, 11610 Grazalema. ☎/fax **95-613-20-14.** www.casadelaspiedras.net. 32 units, 16 with shared bathroom. 55€ double. DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant.

Hotel El Horcajo ★ ☺ Set on a working estate in the Grazalema Parque Natural, this is a traditional Spanish colonial-style farmhouse with whitewashed walls and iron grilles at the windows. The building dates from the 19th century, and the bedrooms have been installed in what were once stables. The main country house, still with its vaulted arches and wood beamed ceilings, is more than 170 years old. It has retained much of its original character and offers an intimate family atmosphere. The very sober but cozy bedrooms are furnished with tiles and light wooden pieces. Constructed near the main building are 10 family units with a large double bed plus two single beds upstairs. These are built in a traditional style that blends in with the older structures. Many units open onto a private terrace overlooking the estate. Rooms are decorated with locally crafted materials, and there is a comfortable lounge for guests. Typical local food is served, including some produce grown on the estate.

Carretera Ronda, 29400 Grazalema. www.elhorcajo.com. ☎ **95-218-40-80.** Fax 95-218-41-71. 24 units. 66€–82€ double; 84€–107€ triple; 112€–145€ quad. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Villas Turisticas de Grazalema ★★ ☺ Operated by the province of Cádiz as an amenity for family vacationers, this bargain complex is an ideal base for spending a few days to hike the park or just to get away with the kids. The hotel portion has spacious rooms above the excellent dining room, and an additional cluster of buildings contains modern one- and two-bedroom apartments with wood-burning fireplaces. (Firewood is supplied!)

Carretera Olivar s/n, 29400 Grazalema. www.tugasa.com. ☎ **95-613-22-13.** 24 rooms, 38 apts. Double 60€ with full breakfast; apt 70€ for 1 bedroom, 120€ for 2 bedrooms without breakfast. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, full kitchen w/dishwasher and laundry (apt only), hair dryer.

Gaucín

From Grazalema, take A-374 southwest to Ubrique. From here, get on A-373 south. The route will curve east to Cortez de la Frontera. Once you reach this town, continue along the same A-373 south to Algatocín. At this point, connect with the A-369 and follow it southwest until you connect with the A-377 into Gaucín (look for signs). Allow at least an hour for the 63km (39-mile) trip.

This whitewashed mountain town is perched on a ridge below a former Muslim fortress, which opens onto a panoramic vista of the countryside. Many expat Brits live here.

At the eastern edge of the village, head up to the **Castillo del Aguila,** the Moorish castle. From its battlements, you can look out over the countryside and on a clear day see all the way to the Rock of Gibraltar. It's open daily from 11am to 1pm and 4 to 6pm. Admission is free.

The best place to stay and dine is **La Fructuosa,** Calle Convento 67, 29480 Gaucín (www.lafructuosa.com; ✆ **95-215-10-72**), in the center of Gaucín. Its bedrooms are simply but comfortably furnished, each with a tiled bathroom. Rooms go for 88€ to 98€ double. The hotel restaurant, serving meals for 20€, is open Wednesday to Saturday 8 to 10pm. The style of cooking is typically Andalucían, and portions are generous.

Jimena de la Frontera ★

To reach this white town from Gaucín, take the winding A-369 out of town, traveling southwest for some 30 minutes, a distance of 23km (14 miles). Enveloped by Los Alcornocales Natural Park, Jimena was built 200m (656 ft.) above sea level. It lies so close to San Roque on the Costa del Sol and its string of beaches that it gets a lot of visitors on day trips, especially from the exclusive golf and polo belt of the coast. Chic Sotorgrande, an upmarket resort, is just a short drive to the south.

You enter Jimena through a gateway of three arches. Over the years the town has known many rulers, from the Phoenicians and Romans to the Moors, and ultimately the Christian armies.

It's a delight to walk the steep and narrow cobblestone streets of Jimena, one of the more dramatic of the Pueblos Blancos. It takes about 15 minutes to ascend to the highest point, the castle-fortress built on Roman ruins. Today the **Castillo-Fortaleza ★** is in ruins but is still impressive. Inside the castle enclosure, you can take in one of the most panoramic views of the Costa del Sol, including the Rock of Gibraltar and the port of Algeciras, where ferries depart for Morocco.

Visitors with more time will find that Jimena is a gateway to the **Parque Natural de los Alcornocales ★★** (see Zahara de la Sierra, p. 328, for tourist information), stretching south to the Mediterranean and north to one of the white towns, El Bosque. The park is named for its cork oaks *(alcornocales),* which are among the largest in the world, but is also home to the gall and the Holm oak as well as wild olive trees. Creatures such as the Egyptian mongoose, the royal eagle, eagle owls, lion buzzards, and the roebuck also inhabit the park, and farmers graze their black-footed *ibérico* pigs in some parts of the region, fattening them on acorns. The park is one of the most heavily forested in Spain and will give you a sense of what Iberia used to look like before being deforested.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Hostal El Anón ANDALUCÍAN An American citizen, Suzana Odell, opened this place in 1979. The restaurant lies in the Hostal El Anón, a series of small houses and stables blended seamlessly together, and serves savory and affordable Andalucían cuisine. Begin, perhaps, with the kidney pâté and follow with the freshly arrived catch of the day, hauled up from the Costa del Sol; many savvy locals prefer it just with olive oil and lemon. Local chicken is tantalizingly prepared with grapes, and a tender sirloin of beef appears on a platter with a blue-cheese sauce.

The hotel has an inviting Andalucían courtyard along with a rooftop pool. The style is rustic with wooden furniture, antique ceramics, and copper ornaments. Parts of the building are 3 centuries old. The *hostal*'s 14 comfortably furnished bedrooms are priced at 62€ for a double, including breakfast.

Calle Consuelo 36. www.hostalanon.com. ✆ **95-664-01-13.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–24€. DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–3:30pm and 8–11:30pm. Closed 2 weeks in late June.

Medina Sidonia

From Jimena, take C-333 northwest until you come to the junction with A-375 heading southwest to the junction with A-381. Once on A-381, continue northwest into Medina Sidonia. This 86km (53-mile) trip takes about an hour.

This village has seen better days, but wandering its cobbled and narrow streets is still an evocative experience, a bit like stepping back into the Middle Ages. Start at the central square, **Plaza de España.** The most impressive architecture here is the Renaissance facade of the 17th-century **Ayuntamiento (town hall).**

Nearby is the town's second-most-beautiful square, **Plaza Iglesia Mayor.** Here you can visit **Iglesia Santa María La Coronada,** open daily from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm; admission is 2.50€. Built on the foundations of a former mosque, it is celebrated for its stunning ***retablo*** **★★**, standing 15m (49 ft.) high. The *retablo* depicts scenes from the life of Jesus and is a piece of master work in polychrome wood achieved by the artisans of the Middle Ages.

After the church you can visit the **Roman Sewers,** entered at Calle Ortega 10. They're open daily from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and admission is 3€. The sewers date from the 1st century A.D. With the same ticket, you can also see the ruins of a well-preserved **Roman road** nearby. More Moorish architecture is seen in a trio of gates, the best preserved of which is **Arco de la Pastora,** lying close to the Carretera de Jerez.

For information about the area, head to the local **tourist office,** Plaza Iglesia Mayor (✆ **95-641-22-92**), open daily from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm.

If you find yourself in Medina for lunch, consider stopping at **Venta La Duquesa** (www.duquesa.com; ✆ **95-641-08-36**), lying along A-393 3km (1¾ miles) to the southeast. The food is good and well prepared, without rising to any spectacular heights. Try the loin of pork, which is well spiced and tasty, or a more local dish, partridge baked with onions and mushrooms. Main courses cost 12€ to 18€.

SHERRY TRIANGLE

After your tour of Medina Sidonia, you can take A-381 northwest all the way to Jerez de la Frontera. The distance from Vejer to Jerez is 36km (22 miles). The trip takes 35 minutes. Once in Jerez, you'll be in the center of the sherry-producing district of Andalucía, the **Sherry Triangle** (see below).

Three cities make up this region: **Jerez de la Frontera** (see below) and the port cities of **El Puerto de Santa María** (p. 344) and **Sanlúcar de Barrameda** (p. 342). If you have time to visit only one, make it Jerez, which has the largest bodegas open to the public; you can see how sherry is produced and taste samples. Jerez also gets the nod because it is a great equestrian center, known for its Carthusian horses, and it is also one of the best places to hear authentic flamenco.

Visitors flock to Sanlúcar de Barrameda for its beaches and also for its sherry bodegas. Those arriving at Puerto de Santa María find a dilapidated but intriguing little fishing port with lovely beaches nearby. Columbus once lived here. It deserves at least a day as you visit its sherry and brandy bodegas and sample its *marisco* (shellfish) bars along the water.

Jerez de la Frontera ★★

87km (54 miles) S of Sevilla, 593km (368 miles) SW of Madrid, 34km (21 miles) NE of Cádiz

The charming Andalucían city of Jerez de la Frontera made a name for itself in England for the millions of casks of sherry it has shipped there over the centuries.

Founded nearly 3,000 years ago, Jerez is a modern, progressive city with wide boulevards, an intriguing Old Quarter, and an industrial outer ring. Busloads of visitors pour in every year to get free drinks at one of the bodegas where sherry is aged and bottled. Many bodegas close for part or all of August.

The name of the town—which is also the Spanish word for sherry—is pronounced Heh-*res,* or Heh-*reth* in Castellano dialect. The French and the Moors called it various names, including Heres, Scheris, and Xeres, which the English corrupted to Sherry. Thanks to the long history of commerce with the British Isles, Jerez is perhaps the Spanish city where English is most widely spoken.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Iberia offers **flights** to Jerez daily from Barcelona and Zaragoza; four daily flights from Madrid; and several flights a week to and from Germany, London, and, in the summer, Grand Canary Island. The airport at Carretera Jerez-Sevilla is about 11km (6¾ miles) northeast of the city center (follow the signs to Sevilla). Visit www.aena.es, or call ✆ **90-240-47-04,** for information.

Most visitors arrive by one of 15 **trains** per day from Sevilla, taking 1¼ hours and costing 9.15€ one-way. Trains from Madrid also arrive daily (trip time: 4 hr.). A ticket from Madrid to Jerez on the ALVIA costs 70€, and the trip takes 4 hours. The railway station in Jerez is at the Plaza de la Estación s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), at the eastern end of Calle Medina.

Bus connections are more frequent than train connections, and the location of the bus terminal is more convenient. You'll find it on Calle Cartuja at the corner of Calle Madre de Dios, a 12-minute walk east of the Alcázar. About 17 buses arrive daily from Cádiz (1 hr. away) and three buses per day travel from Ronda (2¾ hr.). Seven buses a day arrive from Sevilla (1½ hr.). Call ✆ **90-219-92-08** for more information.

Jerez lies on the highway (E-5) connecting Sevilla with Cádiz, Algeciras, Gibraltar, and the ferryboat landing for Tangier, Morocco. There's also an overland road connecting Jerez with Granada and Málaga.

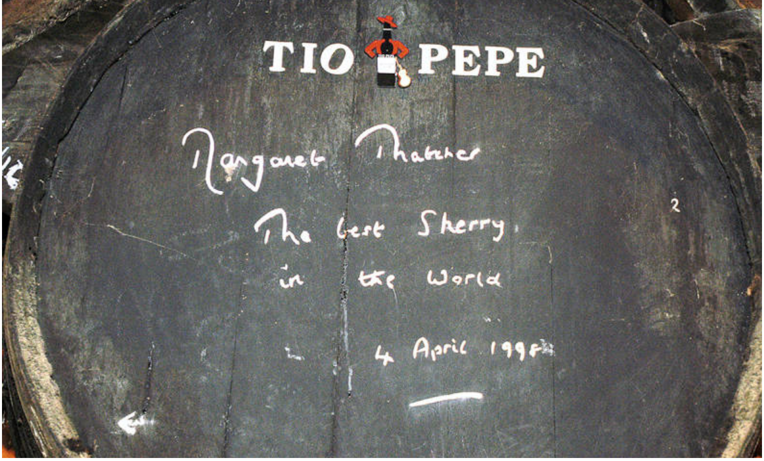
VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Alameda Cristina s/n (✆ **95-633-88-74**). It's open in winter Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm and 4:30 to 6:30pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 2:30pm; in summer, hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 2:30pm. The English-speaking staff can provide directions, transportation suggestions, open hours, and so on for any bodega you might want to visit. You'll also be given a map pinpointing the location of various bodegas.

EXPLORING THE AREA

Touring the Bodegas ★★

Jerez is not surrounded by vineyards as you might expect. Instead, the vineyards lie to the north and west in the "Sherry Triangle" marked by Jerez, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and El Puerto de Santa María (the latter two towns are on the coast). This is where top-quality *albariza* soil is found, the highest quality containing an average of 60% chalk, which is ideal for the cultivation of grapes used in sherry production, principally the white Palomino de Jerez. The best time to visit is September. However, you can count on the finest in hospitality year-round, as Jerez is widely known for the warm welcome it bestows.

In and around Jerez there must be more than 100 bodegas where you not only see how sherries are made, bottled, and aged, but also get free samples. Among the



A barrel of Tío Pepe sherry from González Byass.

most famous producers are Sandeman, Pedro Domecq, and González Byass, the maker of Tío Pepe. On a typical visit to a bodega, you'll be shown through several buildings in which sherry and brandy are manufactured. In one building, you'll see grapes being pressed and sorted (in the fall); in another, the bottling process; in a third, thousands of large oak casks. Then it's on to an attractive bar where various sherries—amber, dark gold, cream, red, sweet, and velvety—can be sampled. ***Tip:*** If tasting, always start with the lightest and driest sherry, either a fino or, on the coast, a manzanilla. Keep in mind that sherry is much higher in alcohol than table wine.

Most bodegas are open Monday to Friday from 10:30am to 1:30pm. Many of them close during much of August, but reopen by the third week of the month to prepare for the wine festival in early September. Of the dozens of bodegas you can visit, a couple of the most popular are listed below. Some charge an admission fee and require a reservation.

One of the most famous names is **González Byass,** Manuel María González 12 (www.gonzalezbyass.com; ✆ **95-635-70-16**); admission is 8€, and reservations are required. Tours in English depart at noon, 1, 2, 5, and 6:30pm from Monday to Saturday; at noon, 1, and 2pm on Sunday. Equally famous is **Alvaro Domecq,** Calle San Luis (www.alvarodomecq.com; ✆ **95-633-96-34**). Reservations are required, and admission is 7€. Tours start at 10 and 11am, noon, and 2pm Monday to Friday; additional tours May through September are held on Saturday at noon and 2pm.

Because many people go to Jerez specifically to visit a bodega, August or weekend closings can be very disappointing. If this happens to you, make a trip to the nearby village of Lebrija, about halfway between Jerez and Sevilla, 14km (8⅔ miles) west of the main highway. A good spot to get a glimpse of rural Spain, Lebrija is a local winemaking center where some very fine sherries originate. At one small bodega, **Juan García,** the owner courteously escorts visitors around. There are several other bodegas in Lebrija, and the locals will gladly point them out to you. It's all very casual, and much more informal than in Jerez.

Alcazár ☺ CASTLE Jerez was a frontier town that went back and forth between Moors and Christians, and this fortress was built in the 12th century as a rural outpost to hold the line against Christian encroachment. Nicely preserved, it contains an austerely beautiful mosque, lovely gardens, and some of the best-preserved Moorish baths in Andalucía. Although the mosque was converted to a

The Dancing Horses of Jerez

A rival of sorts to Vienna's famous Spanish Riding School is the **Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre (Andalucían School of Equestrian Art),** Av. Duque de Abrantes s/n (www.realescuela.org; ✆ **95-631-96-35**). In fact, the long, hard schooling that brings horse and rider into perfect harmony originated in this province. The Viennese school was started with Hispano-Arab horses sent from this region, the same breeds you can see today. Every Thursday at noon, crowds come to admire the **Dancing Horses of Jerez** ★★ (pictured) as they perform in a show that includes local folklore. Lanes 1 and 2 (the lanes are rows for seating) sell for 25€, and lanes 3 to 7 go for 18€. When performances aren't scheduled, you can still visit the stables and tack room, observing as the elegant horses are being trained. Hours are Monday to Wednesday and Friday from 10am to 2pm, and admission is 10€ adults, 6€ children and seniors. On the grounds of the school you can visit **Museo del Enganche,** the harness museum, which displays antique carriages. Entrance is 4€. Bus no. 18 goes here.

church in 1264, the *mihrab,* or prayer niche, was preserved—as was the boiler system of the baths, enabling you to see how they operated. The alcázar also functions as a local history museum, displaying two of the ancient olive mills. (In the 1700s, Jerez had 32 active olive mills.) The fortress also contains the Palacio Villavicencio, a noble palace constructed from the late 1600s to 1927. Its history paintings are mostly remarkable for their immense size. A tower room contains a *camera obscura,* which projects images of the city in a darkened room.

Alameda Vieja s/n. www.turismojerez.com. ✆ **95-632-69-23.** Alcázar only 3€ adults, 1.80€ students; with camera obscura 5.40€ adults, 4.20€ students. May–Sept 15 Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 10am–3pm; Sept 16–Apr Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–3pm.

Centro Andaluz de Flamenco CULTURAL INSTITUTION One of the many cradles of flamenco is Jerez, where Moorish, Gypsy, Jewish, and Andalucían traditions met. This academic center possesses the largest public archive of books, musical scores, and performance videos of flamenco in Spain. Flamenco engravings and paintings line the walls of the central courtyard, and free videos are screened daily in the auditorium. You'll always hear flamenco in the background—the center features a different performer every week. Staff are steeped in the local scene; ask about upcoming performances at Jerez *peñas* (clubs of aficionados) or more commercial *tablaos.*

Plaza de San Juan 1. www.centroandaluzdeflamenco.es. ✆ **95-681-41-32.** Free admission. Mon–Fri 10am–2pm.

WHERE TO EAT

El Bosque ★ SPANISH   Located less than 1.6km (1 mile) northeast of the city center, El Bosque opened after World War II and is still the city's most elegant restaurant. A favorite of the older generation of the sherry aristocracy, it retains a strong emphasis on bullfighting memorabilia, which makes up most of the decor. Get the excellent *rabo de toro* (oxtail stew) if you want to dine like a native. You could also begin with a soothing gazpacho, and then try a dish with red tuna from nearby Barbate. Rice with king prawns and baby shrimp omelets are popular. Desserts are usually good, especially the pistachio ice cream.

Av. Alcalde Álvaro Domecq 26. ✆ **95-630-70-30.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–26€; *menú degustación* 26€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–5pm and Tues–Sat 8:30pm–midnight.

Gaitán ANDALUCÍAN   Small, well orchestrated, and cozy, this restaurant—within a pair of cozy dining rooms in the historic core of Jerez, a short walk from the Puerta Santa María—has a certain local notoriety, if only for its fading photos of Spanish celebrities posted on the walls. The dishes tend toward the traditional Andalucían and Basque—but step outside the usual and order the fried red mullet stuffed with ham and spinach. Or try the roast veal, often served with an intense Cabrales cheese sauce. Actually, the sauces seem to be the most Basque thing about this otherwise Andalucían restaurant. Even hake—flown in from Galicia—is served with a dark, sweet sauce based on the syrupy red Pedro Ximenez wine.

Calle Gaitán 3. www.restaurantegaitan.es. ✆ **95-634-58-59.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–22€; fixed-price menu 32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm.

Mesa Redonda ★★ 🎁 SPANISH   This restaurant is a rare treat of imaginative cuisine at modest prices. Owner José Valdestino sought out traditional recipes once served in the homes of the aristocratic sherry dons of Jerez, then figured out how to lighten and brighten them for a contemporary presentation. The restaurant feels like a private residence, complete with a library filled with old recipe books and literature about food and wine. The 10 tables fill quickly, and the menu is ever changing. Try the deboned oxtail with potato topping, a marvelous version of potato salad infused with sherry vinegar and topped with strips of *ibérico* ham. Or have the braised monkfish with broad beans in sherry sauce, or fried mackerel in an almond sauce. For dessert, there's nothing finer than the lemon-and-almond cake.

Manuel de la Quintana 3. ✆ **95-634-00-69.** Reservations required. Main courses 13€–26€; fixed-price menus 26€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed last week in July and 1st 3 weeks in Aug.

WHERE TO STAY

Moderate

Barceló Montecastillo Golf ★   Giving the NH Avenida Jerez (see below) serious competition is this deluxe country club in the rolling hills of the sherry *campiña* (wine country). The area's most tranquil retreat, it has rooms with balconies overlooking the plush, scenic landscape. The hotel is elegantly furnished and professionally run. The spacious rooms are decorated in a provincial French style with elegant fabrics, beautiful linens, and large beds. Its chief downfall is that the location is a 25-minute drive (longer at rush hours) from central Jerez, making it difficult to explore the city or enjoy its restaurants and nightlife. It's a great place to shoot a few rounds of golf, however.

Carretera Arcos, 11406 Jerez de la Frontera. www.barcelomontecastillo.com. ✆ **95-615-12-00.** Fax 95-615-12-09. 170 units. 60€–110€ double; from 110€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; babysitting; exercise room; 18-hole golf course; 3 pools (2 outdoor, 1 heated indoor); spa; outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hipotel Sherry Park Especially noted for its setting within a palm-fringed garden whose tiled borders attract many sun-loving guests, this is one of the best modern hotels in Jerez. It's located on a wide boulevard north of the historic center of town, about a 20-minute walk away. The lobby has marble floors and the guest rooms are fairly standard but comfortable. The uniformed staff lays out a copious breakfast buffet and serves drinks at several hideaways, both indoors and within the garden.

Av. Alcalde Álvaro Domecq 11 bis, 11405 Jerez de la Frontera. www.hipotels.com. ✆ **95-631-76-14.** Fax 95-631-13-00. 174 units. 43€–250€ double; 251€–345€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; babysitting; exercise room; 2 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Guadalete ★ This first-class hotel in a tranquil, exclusive area north of Jerez is a 30-minute walk from the historic core. It may not be as good as the Sherry Park (see above), but it is still one of the town's leading hotels, often hosting business travelers dealing with the sherry industry. A marble-floored lobby, spacious and contemporary public rooms, and palm-tree gardens give this place somewhat of a resort aura. The medium to spacious rooms have state-of-the-art bathrooms with tub/shower combos. The hotel is decorated with original watercolors and lithographs painted by local artists in the 1970s.

Av. Duque de Abrantes 50, 11407 Jerez de la Frontera. www.hotelguadalete.com. ✆ **95-618-22-88.** Fax 95-618-22-93. 137 units. 51€–121€ double. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel La Cueva Park ☺ This charming hotel, in a century-old building 6.5km (4 miles) from the center of town, attracts motorists. It's also a convenient .8km (½ mile) from the bus station. The architecture is typical of Andalucía, with a tiled roof overhanging thick brick walls. Gardens surround the hotel. All the units are medium in size and comfortably furnished. There are nine white-walled bungalow-style apartments classified as suites, each with its own cooking area, living room, and terrace. The outdoor pool is a big draw for families with children.

Carretera de Arcos, Km 7, Apartado 536, 11406 Jerez de la Frontera. www.hotellacueva.com. ✆ **95-618-91-20.** Fax 95-618-91-21. 53 units. 70€–108€ double; 200€–340€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; children's center; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (3€ per hr.).

Hotel Villa Jerez ★★★ Live like a sherry baron during your stay in Jerez. At least that's what it feels like in this boutique hotel carved out of a private mansion north of the Old Town. Each of the 18 rooms is unique, but they all share the same design aesthetic, with weighty traditional Spanish wooden furniture, leather upholstery, and extensive use of wrought-iron fixtures. Every room has a view of the extensive gardens or the luxurious pool. This is very much a sherry aficionado's hotel. The staff knows everyone in the trade and can arrange private bodega tours. Moreover, they'll bring you a glass of fino wherever you are on the property.

Av. de la Cruz Roja, 7, 11405 Jerez de la Frontera. www.villajerez.com. ☎ **95-615-31-00.** Fax 95-630-43-00. 18 units. 70€–150€ double; 100€–180€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking free. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Avenida Jerez ★ About a block closer to the commercial heart of Jerez than the more luxe Villa Jerez (see above), this excellent business hotel occupies a modern balconied structure. Inside, cool polished stone floors, leather armchairs, and a variety of potted plants create a restful haven. The good-size rooms are discreetly contemporary and decorated in neutral colors, with big windows and comfortable beds.

Av. Alcalde Álvaro Domecq 10, 11405 Jerez de la Frontera. www.nh-hoteles.es. ☎ **95-634-74-11.** Fax 95-633-72-96. 95 units. 50€–110€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi in some units (17€ per 24 hr.).

Inexpensive

Hotel Ávila 🏷 One of the better bargains in Jerez, the Ávila occupies a modern building near the post office and the Plaza del Arenal in the commercial center of town. Its rooms are clean, comfortable, and well maintained, although not special in any way. The beds, however, are quite comfortable and the bathrooms are well equipped.

Calle Ávila 3, 11401 Jerez de la Frontera. www.hotelavila.com. ☎ **95-633-48-08.** Fax 95-633-68-07. 33 units. 57€–123€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 8€–10€ nearby. **Amenities:** Bar; Internet (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Coloso 🏷 Located a few steps from the Plaza de las Angustias in the historic center, this is one of the best bargains in town—modest but rather charming. The decor is in the conventional local style, with whitewashed walls and a trio of Andalucían-style patios with balconies opening onto street scenes of Jerez. The hotel opened in 1969, and its rooms have been renovated many times since and are well maintained. Breakfast is the only meal served.

Calle Pedro Alonso 13, 11402 Jerez de la Frontera. www.elcolosohotel.com. ☎/fax **95-634-90-08.** 26 units. 65€–115€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking 8€. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Sanlúcar de Barrameda ★

25km (15 miles) NW of Jerez, 629km (391 miles) SW of Madrid, 52km (32 miles) N of Cádiz

This port town where the great Rio Guadalqivír meets the Bay of Cádiz may have lost its deep harbor of ages past, but its sand bars and silted beaches make it a playground of the south. Tens of thousands of well-off Spaniards flock here around Easter to bask in the sun, walk or ride horses on the beach, and eat mounds of fresh seafood in the restaurants. Sanlúcar is also the principal producer of manzanilla sherry, a light and delicate style that can only be obtained by aging in the salt air by the ocean.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The simplest way to get to Sanlúcar from Jerez is to drive the 25km (15 miles) on the A-480. Alternately, buses run every hour between Jerez and Sanlúcar from 7am to 9pm weekdays, or every 2 hours from 9am to 9pm on weekends.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Calzada de Ejército s/n (✆ **95-636-61-10**), just a block inland from the beach. It's open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 2pm and 6 to 8pm. The English-speaking staff can provide a map and overview of the attractions and sherry bodegas.

EXPLORING SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA

Sanlúcar's harbor at the mouth of the Guadalquivír was once so deep that Columbus launched his third voyage to America here. But centuries of silting have made the river shallower, creating lovely in-town beaches and protecting the upstream wetlands of **Parque Doñana** (see below). The healthy estuarine system is a fisherman's delight. Look for extraordinary shrimp, king prawns, and rock lobster on restaurant menus. Most visitors gravitate to the sandy strand at Bajo de Guia or to restaurant-lined Plaza del Cabildo.

When Magellan sailed from Sanlúcar in 1519 to circumnavigate the globe, he reportedly spent more on manzanilla than he did on armaments. Many of the town's sherry producers offer guided tours, but only **Bodegas Pedro Romero ★**, Calle Trasbola 84 (www.pedroromero.es; ✆ **95-636-07-36**), offers a free audioguide tour whenever the shop is open. You'll get a key and a map so you can enter each building to observe the sherry-making process. The bodega is open daily 9am to 8pm. The audioguide tour is free, while guided tours cost 6€. Guided tours in English run September to May Monday to Saturday at noon and Tuesday to Friday at 6pm; in July and August they also run Tuesday to Friday at 8:30pm.

The marques emblazoned on cafe umbrellas on **Plaza del Cabildo ★** signal who owns each bar. Order a plate of shrimp and a manzanilla at **Casa Balbino,** Plaza del Cabildo 11 (✆ **95-636-05-13**), and enjoy the sunshine.

Parque Doñana ★★ Sanlúcar is the departure for boat trips to the marshes at the mouth of the Guadalquivír River. More than merely scenic, they sustain the Bay of Cádiz shellfishery, and were finally recognized in the late 20th century as one of the most important estuary systems in Europe. They literally keep millions of birds alive as they migrate each year between Europe and Africa. The marshes are also rich with resident storks, egrets, herons, and songbirds. The interpretive center at the **Fábrica de Hielo (Ice House)** on Bajo de Guia beach explains the marshes, shifting sands, and stabilized sands of the complex ecosystem. The center books 2½-hour riverboat trips into the park with two stops for guided walks.

Av. Bajo de Guia s/n. ✆ **95-638-16-35.** Free admission. Riverboat trips 160€ adults, 8€ seniors and children, 34€ families. Daily 9am–8pm. Riverboat trips Nov–Feb 10am, Mar–May and Oct 10am and 4pm, June–Sept 10am and 5pm.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Restaurante Mirador de Doñana ★★ ANDALUCÍAN Arguably the best of the waterfront seafood restaurants in a town praised throughout Spain for its seafood. Mirador de Doñana gets the top of the catch, whether shellfish from the Bay of Cádiz or the bigger Atlantic fin fish (yellowfin tuna and swordfish, especially) landed in Barbate on the Costa de la Luz south of Cádiz. The upstairs dining room has sweeping views of the bay, but the beach-side tables are the most coveted.

Bajo de Guia. www.miradordonana.com. ✆ **95-636-42-05.** Reservations recommended for best views. Main courses 9€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 7:30–11pm. Closed Jan–Feb.

Hotel Los Helechos While Sanlúcar has some exclusive and luxurious hotels near the beach, Los Helechos has light-filled, high-ceilinged rooms around a patio with a burbling fountain. It's a 10-minute walk to either the beach or Plaza del Cabildo.

Plaza Madre de Dios, 9, 1540 Sanlúcar de Barrameda. www.hotelloshelechos.com. ✆ **95-636-13-49.** Fax 95-636-96-50. 54 rooms. 58€–76€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; Internet (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

El Puerto de Santa María

24km (15 miles) SE of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 27km (16 miles) north of Cádiz by road, 16km (10 miles) SW of Jerez de la Frontera

This deep-water port just a short ferry ride from Cádiz (see below) has a long and storied history. Columbus's flagship, the Santa María, hailed from here and a plaque on the 12th-century castle in the heart of town honors local mariners who took part in the 1492 journey. Today Santa María is primarily a fishing port filled with small shrimpers and deepwater tuna boats. The immense **Plaza de Toros** bullring is one of the region's most celebrated, but fights are mostly limited to the spring season in April. The town's cavernous warehouses are filled with sherry. Pick up a map and list of "monuments" from the **Tourist Office,** Calle Guadalete s/n (www.turismoelpuerto.com; ✆ **95-654-24-75**). It is open daily 10am to 2pm and 5:30 to 7:30pm.

One sherry producer regularly open for visits (except Aug.) is **Bodega de Mora,** Calle Los Moros s/n (www.osborne.es/rrpp; ✆ **95-686-91-00**). This facility makes manzanilla for Osborne, the company whose giant silhouettes of black bulls dot the Spanish hillsides. Reserve ahead for a tour in English Monday to Friday at 10:30am and Saturday at 11am. Admission is 3€ and includes a tasting.

Bodegas Williams & Humbert, Carretera Nacional IV (www.williams-humbert.com; ✆ **95-635-34-05**), offers tours from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday, charging 10€. Their premium brands include the world-famous Dry Sack Medium Sherry, Canasta Cream, Fino Pando, and Manzanilla Alegría, in addition to Gran Duque de Alba Gran Reserva Brandy. It's wise to reserve in advance.

Cádiz gourmets often hop the ferry just to eat at **Romerijo ★★★**, Calle José Antonio Romero Zarazaga 1 at Ribera del Río (www.romerijo.com; ✆ **95-654-33-53**). This sprawling shellfish market has an adjoining bar and restaurant. The choice of fish and shellfish on ice is encyclopedic, covering most species from both the western Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic. Best bet is to order one of the sampler plates that might include three or four kinds of shrimp and a few types of saltwater crayfish or members of the lobster family. Market prices prevail, but expect to pay 13€ to 30€ per person. Romerijo accepts most credit cards; it opens early for lunch (around 11am) and closes late (midnight or later in the summer).

CÁDIZ ★

122km (76 miles) S of Sevilla, 625km (388 miles) SW of Madrid

Cádiz is the oldest inhabited city in Europe, founded in 1100 B.C. by the Phoenicians. Today, this modern, bustling Atlantic port is a melting pot of Americans, Africans, and Europeans who are docking or passing through. The Old Quarter teems with local characters, little dives, and seaport alleys. Reasons to visit include its thriving local culture, great beaches, vibrant music scene, and wonderful seafood restaurants. But most travelers are interested in the legacies of the various cultures that have shaped the city. Phoenicians, Arabs, Visigoths, Romans, and Carthaginians all passed through Cádiz and left their imprints. Throughout the ages, this ancient port city has enjoyed varying states of prosperity, especially after the discovery of the New World.

At the end of a peninsula, Cádiz separates the Bay of Cádiz from the Atlantic, and from numerous sea walls around the town you have views of the ocean. It was here that Columbus set out on his second voyage.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Twelve daily **trains** arrive from Sevilla (trip time: 2 hr.; 13€ one-way), Jerez de la Frontera (40 min.; 54€ round-trip), and Córdoba (3 hr.; 24€ round-trip). The train station is on Avenida del Puerto, Plaza de Sevilla 1 (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), on the southeast border of the main port.

Four daily **buses** run from Madrid to Cádiz. Trip time is 8¼ hours and a one-way ticket costs 25€. The bus is operated by **Secorbus** (www.socibus.es; ✆ **90-222-92-92**), at Avenida José León de Carranza (N-20). The terminal is on the north side of town, a few blocks west of the main port.

Driving from Sevilla, the A-4 (also called E-5), a toll road, or N-IV, a toll-free road running beside it, will bring you into Cádiz.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Av. Ramón de la Carranza s/n (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-628-56-01**), is open during the summer Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday to Sunday 10am to 2pm, and during the winter Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm and Saturday to Sunday 10am to 1:30pm.

Exploring Cádiz

A stroll along its **seaside promenades ★★** is reason enough to visit Cádiz. The port city's *paseo* circles the Old Town and follows the sometimes turbulent Atlantic Ocean. There is no better way to get an understanding of the city and its relationship to the sea, on which Cádiz has always relied for its life and its commerce. You can only imagine what the port must have looked like when the harbor was filled with Spanish galleons bound for and returning from the New World.

The southern and western promenades overlook the ocean. Those *paseos* lead to the famous public gardens of Cádiz, including **Parque Genovés ★**, with its exotic trees and plants brought in from all over the world. Summer concerts are presented here, and the park also has a palm garden, just like the type enjoyed in the oases of North Africa across the sea.

From Parque Genovés, follow Avenida Duque de Nájera to **Playa de la Caleta,** one of the Cádiz's most popular beaches. At the northern end of this bay stands **Castillo de Santa Catalina** (✆ **95-622-63-33**). It was built in 1598 and for many decades was the port's main citadel. Except for the views, there isn't that much to see here, but it's open for guided visits that depart every half-hour. In summer it's open daily 10:30am to 8pm, and in winter only Sunday and Monday 10:30am to 6pm. No admission is charged.

Cádiz's promenade along the sea.

Catedral de Cádiz CATHEDRAL This gold-domed baroque peacock by architect Vicente Acero has a neoclassical interior dominated by an outstanding apse. Construction began in 1720 but the cathedral wasn't completed until 1838. The tomb of Cádiz-born composer Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) lies in a splendid crypt. Haydn composed *Seven Last Words* for this cathedral, the last great cathedral erected in Spain that was financed by riches from the New World. It is still laden with treasures that include the **Custodia del Millón,** a monstrance set with a million precious stones. Onsite is a **museum** filled with art and more treasures. Much of the gold, silver, and precious jewels on show here came from the New World. Note Enrique de Arfe's processional cross, which is carried through the streets in the annual Corpus Christi parades.

A waterfall in the Parque Genovés.

Next door is the church, **Iglesia de Santa Cruz,** Plaza Fray Félix (✆ **95-628-77-04**), which was the original cathedral, built in the 1200s. The invading British destroyed this *catedral vieja* in 1592 but it has been rebuilt. The church is open Tuesday to Thursday and Saturday 10am to 1pm and 5:30 to 8:30pm, Friday 9am to 1:30pm and 5:30 to 8pm, and Sunday 10:30am to 1pm and 6:15 to 7:30pm. Admission is free.

In back of the cathedral, properly called La Catedral de San Salvador, are found the unimpressive ruins of what was once a mammoth **Teatro Romano** (✆ **95-620-33-68**), entered by way of Campo del Sur. It is open daily from 10am to 2pm; admission is free.

Plaza Catedral. www.catedraldecadiz.com. ✆ **95-628-61-54.** Admission 5€. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 1–6:30pm. Bus: L2.

Museo de Cádiz ★ MUSEUM This museum is housed in two buildings, one a former Franciscan convent, the other a contemporary structure. It has three sections, two devoted to archaeology and fine arts, plus an ethnological collection. Among the ancient relics, the most intriguing collection is a series of two 5th-century-B.C. Phoenician **sarcophagi** ★ carved into human likenesses. Depicting both a man and a woman, these tombs were copied by Greek artists after Egyptian models. There is also an intriguing collection of rare Phoenician jewelry and (mostly) headless Roman statues. The Fine Arts Department is rich in 17th-century Spanish painting and is known especially for its works by **Zurbarán.** Dating from the peak of his mastery between 1630 and 1640, these 21 magnificent **paintings** ★★ of angels, saints, and monks were brought here from a Carthusian monastery in Jerez de la Frontera and are today the pride of Cádiz. Zurbarán was at his best when painting his *Quartet of Evangelists.* Murillo and Ribera are among the other Spanish masters represented. In the ethnological section, the folklore of the province lives again in the **Tía Norica puppet theater** ★, with its props and characters that have delighted young and old for years.
Plaza de Mina s/n. www.museosdeandalucia.es. ✆ **95-620-33-68.** Admission 1.50€. Tues 2:30–8:30pm; Wed–Sat 9am–8:30pm; Sun 9am–2:30pm. Bus: L2, 1, 3, 5, or 8.

Where to Eat

Achuri ★ BASQUE/ANDALUCÍAN Achuri, a block behind the Palace of Congress in the historic district, is one of the best-loved restaurants in this old port city. It's been in the same family for half a century, earning a fine reputation. The interior is in a typical Mediterranean-port style, white stucco walls adorned with paintings interspersed with windows letting in plenty of sunshine.

A portrait of Saint Bruno by Zurbarán, in the Museo de Cádiz.

The menu includes fresh anchovies in virgin olive oil with a green-leaf salad, *merluza al achuri* (hake casserole with green asparagus sauce), and *pardo al brandy* (red snapper in brandy sauce). Another excellent dish is *bacalao en rosa verde* (salt cod in tomato-and-vegetable sauce).

Calle Plocia 15. ✆ **95-625-36-13.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–25€; fixed-price menus 15€–25€. AE, MC, V. Thurs–Sat 12:30–4pm and 8–11:30pm; Sun 12:30–4pm. Closed Dec 23–Jan 8. Bus: L2.

El Faro ★★★ SEAFOOD/ANDALUCÍAN Since its founding in 1964, this has been among Old Town's best and most respected restaurants, featuring a busy tapas bar near the Mudéjar entrance. El Faro is decorated with tile work and marble. Tables are elaborately adorned and set with crisp napery, and lots of cutlery, crystal, and flowers. The waitstaff is the most polished in Cádiz. Tempting specialties include fresh fish and shellfish based on the catch of the day. Since the kitchen has a good hot oven, salt-crusted whole fish is always a treat. Begin perhaps with the seafood soup and follow with roulades of sole with fresh spinach, fried red mullet, or roasted monkfish with strips of serrano ham.

Calle San Félix 15. www.elfarodecadiz.com. ✆ **95-621-10-68.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–25€; fixed-price menus 48€–63€; *menú degustación* 45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Bus: 2 or 7.

El Ventorillo del Chato ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN El Chato (the Pug Nose) is the nickname of the original founder of this inn, which was launched in 1780 on the isthmus linking the port city to the mainland. It's also known as the place where, while technically under house arrest, the Spanish king Fernando VII came to eat drink and cavort with the port-city prostitutes. It is a low-slung, whitewashed, and boxy-looking building that's perched beside the roaring highway (CA-33) stretching from the new city toward the suburb of San Fernando. Inside the restaurant, you'll find a thick-walled shelter of enormous charm, with a wood-burning stove, flowers, and a collection of 19th-century antiques. The food is excellent. Try the *arroz del señorito* (a rice casserole of shellfish that has been taken from the shells and cleaned before cooking), *arroz negro con chocos* (squid with rice colored by its own ink), or *dorada en berenjena confitada al vino tinto* (sea bream with eggplant cooked with red-wine sauce).

Carretera de Cádiz a San Fernando, Km 2. ✆ **95-625-00-25.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–30€; tasting menus 40€–63€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Bus: 2 or 7.

Entertainment & Nightlife

In Cádiz, the city's role as a beach resort deeply affects the way night owls party after dark. In winter, when cold winds blow in from the Atlantic across the Bahía de Cádiz, nightclubbers find shelter in the Old Town, especially in its northernmost quadrant, the neighborhood radiating outward from the **Plaza de San Francisco.** Here, within a labyrinth of impossibly narrow streets, cubbyhole tapas bars get going around 10pm and roar until 4am.

For an early tapas adventure, you can head for **Casa Manteca,** Corralón de los Carros 66 (✆ **95-621-36-03**), the best-known tavern in the Barrio La Viña. Over the years this was the preferred hangout for local bullfighters and flamenco singers and dancers. Its sherry comes from the vineyards of neighboring Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María. Dig into the fresh anchovies, regional sausages, caviar, and the best-tasting *chacina* (Iberian ham) in town. Most tapas range from 1.50€ to 3.50€. Hours are Tuesday to Sunday noon to 4pm and 8pm to 1am.

In summer (late May to late Sept), nightlife moves to the beachfronts, especially the Playa Victoria. Beginning around 2:30am, there's a migration to nightclubs that include **Barabass,** Calle Muñoz Arenillas 4–6 (☎ **95-607-90-26**), very close to Glorieta Ingeniero La Cierva and the Playa Victoria Hotel. It's known for theme parties that vary with the night of the week. These might revolve around Brazilian ("Love in Ipanema") or Dominican ("Merengue Madness") music, or house and garage music ("Mol Cool").

Where to Stay

Like any international port, Cádiz has a number of inexpensive lodging options, some of which are quite dicey. For a moderate price, though, you can afford some of the finest hotels in the city. Note that rooms are scarce during the February Carnaval season.

Hospedería Las Cortes de Cádiz ★ 🎁 This 21st-century hotel occupies a patrician merchant's house that was built in 1859 with profits generated from trade with Spain's New World colonies. The hotel's centerpiece is a graceful three-story courtyard lined with stone columns and capped with a skylight. Each of the bedrooms evokes late-19th-century Cádiz, with a variety of mostly monochromatic color schemes that include a courageous use of vibrant pinks, blues, and buttercup yellow. Each of the other rooms is named for a historical event or person significant to the history of Cádiz. One of the nicest is La Caleta, which has a mirador-style glassed-in balcony overlooking the busy pedestrian traffic on the street below. This was the Old Town's first hotel to combine a historic core with modern-day conveniences.

Calle San Francisco 9, 11004 Cádiz. www.hotellascortes.com. ☎ **95-622-04-89.** Fax 95-621-26-68. 36 units. 65€–130€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 20€ per day. Bus: 2 or 7. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Puertatierra This city-center hotel is close to the financial and shopping section of town. Its midsize bedrooms are furnished with modern pieces, color-coordinated fabrics, and often painted provincial wooden furniture. This neoclassical hotel stands less than 100m (328 ft.) from Santa María del Mar beach.

Av. de Andalucía 34, 11008 Cádiz. www.hotelesmonte.com. ☎ **95-627-21-11.** Fax 95-625-03-11. 98 units. 55€–148€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. Bus: 1, 2, or 7. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

COSTA DE LA LUZ

Huelva: 632km (393 miles) SW of Madrid, 91km (57 miles) W of Sevilla. Tarifa: 95km (59 miles) SE of Cádiz, 691km (429 miles) SW of Madrid

The entire Atlantic coast of Spain goes under the moniker of the Costa de la Luz, or Coast of Light, a region that competes for beach tourists, at least in the Spanish market, with the nearby but overdeveloped Costa del Sol. The Costa de la Luz stretches from the mouth of the Guadiana River, forming the boundary with

Portugal, all the way to Tarifa Point, on the Straits of Gibraltar. Dotting the coast are long stretches of sand, pine trees, fishing cottages, and lazy whitewashed villages.

The Huelva district forms the northwestern half of the Costa de la Luz, between the mouths of the Guadiana and Guadalquivír rivers. The southern half stretches from outside Cádiz southward to Tarifa.

The Huelva Costa

632km (393 miles) SW of Madrid, 91km (57 miles) W of Sevilla

At Huelva, a large statue on the west bank of the river commemorates the departure of Christopher Columbus on his third voyage of discovery. About 7km (4⅓ miles) up on the east bank of the Tinto River, a monument marks the exact spot where his ships were anchored while they were being loaded with supplies before departure.

South of Huelva is the **Monasterio de la Rábida ★**, Palos de la Frontera (www.monasteriodelarabida.com; ✆ **95-935-04-11**), in whose little white chapel Columbus prayed for success on the eve of his voyage. Even without its connections to Columbus, the monastery would be worth a visit for its paintings and frescoes. A guide (bilingual) will show you around the Mudéjar chapel and a large portion of the old monastery, which is open March to July and September to October, Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1pm and 3 to 7pm; in August, hours are Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1pm and 5 to 8pm; and from November to February, it's open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 6:45pm. Admission is 3€, 1.50€ for children 11 and under. The monastery is on the east bank of the Tinto. Take bus no. 1 from Huelva.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Accommodations are severely limited along the northwestern Costa de la Luz in summer, so it's crucial to arrive with a reservation. You can stay at a government-run *parador* east of Huelva in Mazagón (see below), or in Ayamonte, near the Portuguese border.

Ayamonte was built on the slopes of a hill on which a castle stood. It's full of beach high-rises, which, for the most part, contain vacation apartments for Spaniards in July and August. Most of these visitors come from Huelva, Sevilla, and Madrid, so the Costa de la Luz is more Spanish in flavor than the overrun and more international Costa del Sol.

The nearest beaches to Ayamonte center are at Isla Canela and Moral. They are clean and wide and have mostly calm waves. Portions of the beaches are even calmer because of sandbars 50 to 100m (164–328 ft.) from the shore, which become virtual islands at low tide.

Parador de Ayamonte ★★ One of the leading lodging options in Ayamonte is this *parador.* Commanding a sweeping view of the river and the surrounding towns along its banks—sunsets are memorable here—the *parador* is about 30m (98 ft.) above sea level on the site of the old castle of Ayamonte. It was built in a severe modern style and boasts Nordic-inspired furnishings. Most rooms are medium size and comfortably appointed.

Av. de la Constitución s/n, 21400 Ayamonte. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-932-07-00.** Fax 95-902-20-19. 54 units. 60€–140€ double; 170€–228€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. From the center of Ayamonte, signs for the *parador* lead you up a winding road to the hilltop, about 1km (⅔ mile) southeast of the center. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Mazagón ★★ One of the best options in the area is 23km (14 miles) west of Huelva and 6km (3¾ miles) from the center of Mazagón. This *parador* was constructed on a pine-grove cliff overlooking a sandy beach. A rambling 1960s structure, it has comfortable, spacious rooms with balconies and terraces overlooking an expansive garden. Pine groves slope down to the white-sand beach at Mazagón, which is a small village with a number of restaurants. Even if you're just driving and exploring the area, consider a stop here for lunch. The chef specializes in regional dishes, including stuffed baby squid.

Carretera de San Juan del Puerto a Matalascañas s/n, 21130 Mazagón. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-953-63-00.** Fax 95-953-62-28. 63 units. 155€–180€ double; 232€–270€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Exit from Magazón's eastern sector, following the signs to the town of Matalascañas. Take the coast road (Hwy. 442) to the *parador.* **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 heated pools (1 outdoor, 1 indoor); room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Vejer de la Frontera

58km (36 miles) S of Cádiz, 26km (16 miles) SW of Medina Sidonia

The drive south from Cádiz on the E-5 offers a number of tempting turnoffs to beach villages of the Costa de la Luz, but Vejer is unique in the region, as it is a fortified White Town almost on the coast. Still partially walled, Vejer lies in a deep cleft between two hills on the road between Cádiz and Tarifa (the southernmost point in Spain; see below). Located 10km (6¼ miles) inland, the whitewashed village is dominated by its castle and a Gothic church. During Easter, a young bull is allowed to run loose in the stepped and walled city in a reenactment of an ancient rite.

For orientation, head to the **tourist office** at Av. Los Remedios 2 (www.vejerdelafrontera.es; ✆ **95-645-17-36**). Hours are June to August Monday to Friday from 9am to 2pm and 6:30 to 8pm. In August it is also open on Saturday from 10:30am to 2pm. In other months, it keeps no set hours.

You can skip most of the monuments and simply enjoy the beauty of the town. Or else you can duck into **Iglesia del Divino Salvador,** the major church, lying in back of the tourist office. Its doors may or may not be open. It's a mix of styles, including Romanesque, Mudéjar, and Gothic.

A plaza in Vejer de la Frontera.

Castillo Moro (the Moorish Castle) is reached by heading down Calle Ramón y Cajal from the church. The castle keeps such erratic, changing hours it's best to inquire at the tourist office. Over the years it's been altered drastically, but as of 1000 B.C., it is known to have been some sort of fortress, standing watch over the fishing grounds and factories along the coast for the approach of an enemy vessel by sea. The site was also used by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians long before the coming of the Romans. Even if you can't enter the castle, you can admire the panoramic view.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

El Cobijo de Vejer This Moorish-style house with an Andalucían courtyard is a much-restored 250-year-old building. Its flower-filled patio is a delight, and it has individually decorated bedrooms that are midsize and vary in quality. The best units open onto vistas of the town and countryside. Each comes with a tiled bathroom with shower. Some of the units also come with small kitchen units and private sitting rooms.

Calle San Filmo 7, 11150 Vejer de la Frontera. www.elcobijo.com. ✆ **95-645-50-23.** Fax 95-645-17-20. 7 units. 60€–95€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. DC, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge.

Hotel Convento de San Francisco ★ Once a convent for the Clarias order, this restored 17th-century structure is on the smaller of the town's two main squares. Within its intact, ancient stone walls, you'll enjoy the rustic charm and comfort provided by its antique furnishings. Bedrooms are midsize, and each is equipped with a small tiled bathroom. The former chapel holds a cafeteria serving one of the best breakfasts in town. The restaurant, **El Refectorio,** is also an excellent choice for regional specialties; a complete lunch or dinner costs 16€ to 40€.

La Plazuela, 11150 Vejer de la Frontera. www.tugasa.com. ✆ **95-645-10-01.** Fax 95-645-10-04. 25 units. 66€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Tarifa

106km (65 miles) S from Cádiz, 23km (14 miles) SW of Algeciras, 8km (5 miles) N of Morocco

Named for the great Berber general Tarif ibn Malluk, who landed here in 711 to launch his conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, Tarifa has always been defined by its geographical peculiarities. Since it stands on the north side of the Straits of Gibraltar (or the Pillars of Hercules to the ancients), it has always been a causeway between Europe and Africa. Moreover, its location guarantees a strong, steady wind that almost never abates, making Tarifa the windsurfing capital of Europe.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE **Transportes Generales Comes,** Calle Batalla del Salado 19 (www.tgcomes.es; ✆ **90-219-92-08**), has good **bus** links from nearby towns and key points in Andalucía. When its office is closed, you can purchase tickets directly from the driver. There are five buses a day from Cádiz, which take 2 hours and cost 10€ for a one-way ticket. There are even four daily buses from Sevilla, which cost 20€ and take 3 hours.

FRS Ferries (www.frs.es; ✆ **95-668-18-30**) make the run between Tarifa and Tangier. Departures are daily 9am to 11pm; the trip takes only 45 minutes. Returns from Morocco are 8am and 10pm (Morocco time). A round-trip passage costs 74€ for adults and 40€ for children.

TOURIST INFORMATION The **Tarifa Tourist Office,** on Paseo de la Alameda s/n (www.aytotarifa.com; ✆ **95-668-09-93**), is open June to September Monday to Friday 10am to 9pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 2pm and 6 to 8pm. From October to May, hours are Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday 10am to 2pm.

EXPLORING TARIFA

Sights in Tarifa are few and far between, the chief one being the **Castillo de Guzmán** in the center of the Old Town. Built in 960 by the Berbers, it was recaptured and named for the 13th-century Christian strongman Guzmán El Bueno, who became a Spanish folk hero during the Reconquest when he refused to surrender his Tarifa garrison to save the life of his kidnapped son. (Guzmán obviously had at least one other son, as his descendants eventually became the powerful dukes of Medina Sidonia.) It's open Tuesday through Sunday 10am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8pm. Admission is free.

Most people come for the **wind- and wave surfing ★★**, camping where they can (often at **Camping Paloma** or **Camping Torre de la Peña,** both west of town on N-340). Well-heeled surfers try to stay at the legendary **Hurricane Hotel ★★**, also located on the N-340 west of town (www.hurricanehotel.com; ✆ **95-668-49-19**). Built in a Moorish Revival style in the 1980s and set among lush subtropical gardens, it's a far cry from most beach accommodations in southern Spain. Double rooms with breakfast go for 87€ to 171€, family suites 145€ to 255€, and luxury suites 175€ to 282€.

Club Mistral (✆ **95-668-90-98**), at the Hurricane Hotel on Playa de los Lances, rents windsurfing gear and offers classes for rank beginners as well as advanced windsurfers looking to polish their skills for the international competitions. The **World Speed Cup** and the **World Cup Formula** are held on this beach in July and August, respectively.

THE COSTA DEL SOL

9

The mild winter climate and almost-guaranteed summer sunshine have made this stretch of Mediterranean shoreline, known as the Costa del Sol, a year-round attraction. From the harbor city of **Algeciras,** it stretches east to the port city of **Málaga,** then continues east as the Costa Tropical to **Almuñécar.** You'll find a few good beaches, a number of fair ones, and some stony shores, along with sandy coves, whitewashed houses, olive trees, lots of new apartment houses, high-rise hotels, fishing boats, golf courses, souvenir stands, fast-food outlets, water slides, theme parks, and widely varied flora and fauna. You'll also find a lot of bargains on lodging, thanks to overbuilding.

This coastal strip no longer enjoys the chic reputation it had in Franco's day. It is overbuilt and the natural beauty is obscured, though you can still find pockets of posh (including **Puerto Banús,** with its harbor thronging with private yachts). One advantage of the area is that, thanks to highway investments, it's easier to get around now than ever before. The infamous N-340 highway from Málaga to Estepona has become a fast, safe, six-lane road. (In days of yore, it was the most dangerous highway in Spain.) For those traveling long distances along the coast, a new toll expressway with four lanes—called **Autopista del Sol**—has greatly relieved the traffic situation.

The coast is even better for **golf** than for beaches. The best resorts are **Los Monteros** (www.monteros.com; ✆ **95-277-17-00**) in Marbella, which has the leading course; **Hotel Atalaya Park,** in Estepona (www.atalaya-park.es; ✆ **95-288-90-00**); and **Hotel Guadalmina Spa & Golf Resort,** in Marbella (www.hotelguadalmina.com; ✆ **95-288-22-11**). To learn more, pick up a copy of the monthly magazine *Costa Golf* at any newsstand. Many golfers prefer to play a different course at every hotel. Usually, if you notify your hotel reception desk a day in advance, a staff member will arrange a tee time.

Water-skiing and windsurfing are available in every resort, and all types of boats can be rented from kiosks at the main beaches. You don't have to search hard for these outfitters—chances are they'll find you.

From June to October the coast is mobbed, so make sure you have a reservation in advance. And keep in mind that October 12, National Day (celebrating Christopher Columbus) is a national holiday—so make doubly sure of your reservations if you're coming then. At other times, innkeepers are likely to roll out the red carpet.

Many restaurants close around October 15 for a much-needed vacation. Remember, too, that many supermarkets and other facilities are closed on Sunday. Northern European pensioners come in droves during the bargain winter season, but keep in mind that many hotels, restaurants, and attractions either

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The beachfront promenade in Marbella.**

close or keep limited hours between New Year's Day and Easter and the weather can be overcast and rainy. The region claims 320 days of sunshine, but they are far between in late winter and early spring.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES ON THE COSTA DEL SOL

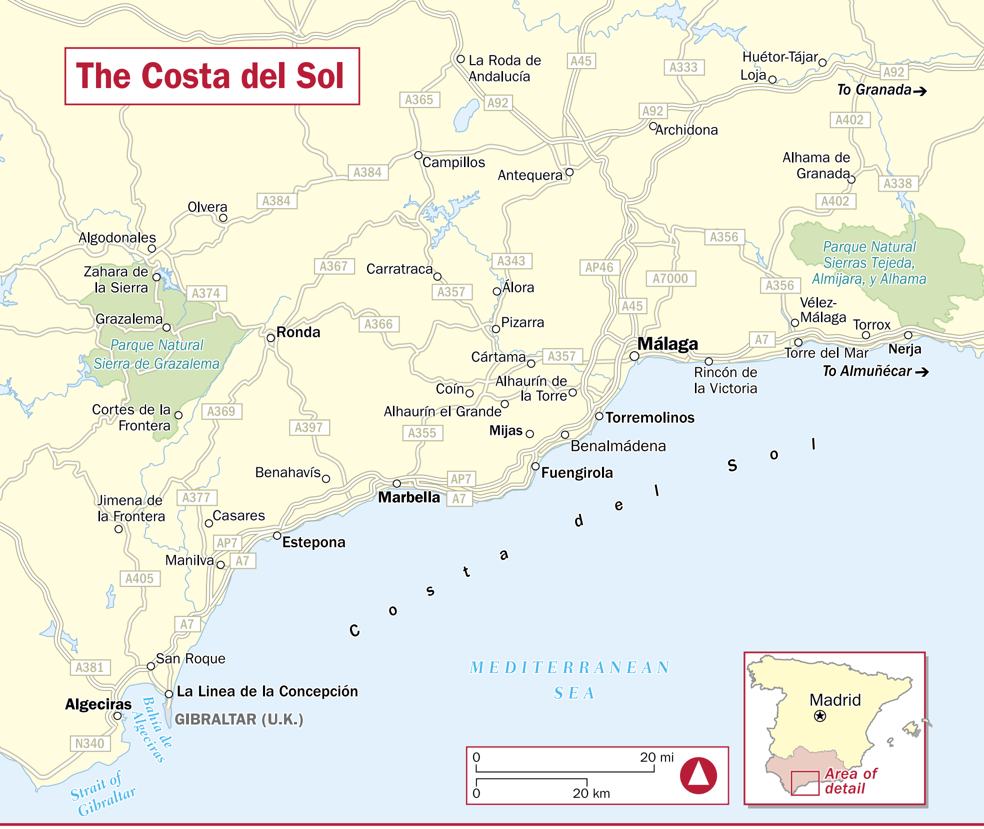
- **Walking in Picasso's footsteps in Málaga:** Picasso may have learned wit in Barcelona and sophistication in Paris, but his dazzling sense of color and sun-splashed spaces grew out of his childhood in Málaga, where even today you can follow young Pablo around.
- **Catching some rays on Playa La Carihuela:** Most travelers come to the Costa del Sol to baste their bodies in tanning oil, recline on a blanket, and roast in the sun, turning every so often like a slow rotisserie. La Carihuela has some of the best sands in Torremolinos.
- **Eating churros for breakfast on the Almuñécar beach:** The stony strand at Almuñécar might not make for the best blanket tanning, but the churro vendors are out in force shortly after dawn, boiling long strips of dough until they're brown, snipping them into segments, and tossing them with sugar.
- **Teeing off at La Cala:** Set in a nature reserve between mountain ridges and the Mediterranean, the three 18-hole courses at La Cala feature world-class design on a challenging and rugged landscape. The La Cala courses frequently host some of golf's top professional tours.
- **Exploring the narrow streets of Mijas:** When the modern high-rise costruction of the coastal communities becomes overwhelming, the old-fashioned village of Mijas is literally a breath of fresh air. Mijas alone among the towns on the Costa del Sol retains the demeanor of a classic Andalucían white village.

ALGECIRAS

679km (422 miles) S of Madrid, 132km (82 miles) W of Málaga

Not really a destination in and of itself, Algeciras is the jumping-off point for Africa—it's only 3 hours by boat to Tangier, Morocco. If you're planning an excursion, there's an inexpensive baggage-storage depot at the ferry terminal. Algeciras is also a base for day trips to **Gibraltar.** For information, check with the Gibraltar Tourist Office, Casemates Square (✆ **00350/2007-4950**). It's open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm, Saturday from 10am to 3pm, and Sunday from 10am to 1pm. If you don't have time to visit "the Rock," you can at least see it from Algeciras—it's only 10km (6¼ miles) away.

Sailing past the rock of Gibraltar.


The Costa del Sol
La Roda de Andalucía
A45
A333
Huétor-Tájar
Loja
A92
To Granada
A365
A92
A92
Archidona
A402
Campillos
Antequera
Alhama de Granada
A338
A384
A384
Olvera
A402
Algodonales
A356
Parque Natural Sierras Tejeda, Almijara, y Alhama
Zahara de la Sierra
A367
Carratraca
A343
AP46
A7000
Álora
A374
A357
A356
Vélez-Málaga
Torrox
Grazalema
A45
A366
Pizarra
Ronda
Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema
Málaga
A7
Nerja
Torre del Mar
Cártama
A357
Rincón de la Victoria
To Almuñécar
Coín
Alhaurín de la Torre
Cortes de la Frontera
A369
Alhaurín el Grande
Torremolinos
A397
A355
Mijas
Benalmádena
Fuengirola
Benahavís
AP7
Marbella
A7
Jimena de la Frontera
A377
Casares
Costa del Sol
Estepona
AP7
Manilva
A7
A405
A7
San Roque
A381
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
La Linea de la Concepción
Algeciras
Bahía de Algeciras
GIBRALTAR (U.K.)
N340
Strait of Gibraltar
0
20 mi
0
20 km
Madrid
Area of detail

Essentials

GETTING THERE The local **RENFE** office is at Calle Juan de la Cierva (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). From Madrid, two **trains** daily make the 5½-hour trip; the fare is 70€. From Málaga, you have to transfer in Bobadilla; the fare is 25€. The trip takes 4 hours and 50 minutes and runs along most of the Costa del Sol, including Marbella and Torremolinos.

Various independent **bus companies** serve Algeciras. **Portillo,** Calle San Bernardo 1 (www.ctsa-portillo.com; ✆ **90-214-31-44**), 1½ blocks to the right when you exit the port complex, runs nearly 20 buses a day along the Costa del Sol to Algeciras from Málaga. It also sends six buses a day to Córdoba (trip time: 6 hr.) and two buses a day to Granada (trip time: 5 hr.). To make connections to or from Sevilla, use **Line Sur,** Calle San Bernardo s/n (www.linesur.com; ✆ **95-498-82-22**). Eight buses a day go to Jerez de la Frontera, and 11 to Sevilla. **Transportes Generales Comes,** Calle San Bernardo 1 (www.tgcomes.es; ✆ **90-219-92-08**), sells tickets to **La Línea,** the border station for the approach to Gibraltar.

Most visitors in Algeciras plan to cross to Tangier, Morocco. **Ferries** leave on the hour daily from 6am to 10pm. A ticket costs 37€ per person. To transport a car costs 125€. The trip takes 1½ hours. ***Tip:*** An express service that runs four times a day 9:30am to 9:30pm and takes only 30 minutes costs the same as the regular ferry. For more information, contact **Acciona**

Trasmediterránea (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **90-245-46-45**). There's an inexpensive, secured baggage storage depot at the ferry terminal if you want to store your things.

Carretera de Cádiz (E-15/N-340) runs from Málaga west to Algeciras. If you're driving south from Sevilla (or Madrid), take highway N-IV to Cádiz, and then connect with the N-340/E-5 southwest to Algeciras.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Avenida Juan de la Cierva (www.andalucia.org; ✆ **95-657-26-36**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm.

Where to Eat

Because Algeciras is not distinguished for its restaurants, many visitors dine at their hotels instead of taking a chance at the dreary little spots along the waterfront.

Montes SPANISH/ANDALUCÍAN This is no more than a little portside eatery, but it's the most popular and the most serviceable joint in town. Throughout the afternoon and deep into the night, the casual diner is filled with foreign travelers, most of whom are either returning from or going to Morocco on one of the ferries. You can fill up on nearly 30 varieties of freshly made small plates, most of them fish or vegetable based. Always featured on the menu is the fresh catch of the day—usually fried, although it can be stewed. One of the chef's specialties is a very filling paella studded with shellfish. Among the meat dishes, the baby beef roast is the perennial favorite.

Calle Juan Morrison 27. ✆ **95-665-42-07.** Main courses 12€–20€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–5pm and 7pm–midnight.

Where to Stay

AC Algeciras The most contemporary hotel in town, this AC stands in front of the Puerto Marítimo, only 1km (⅔ mile) from the city center. The rooms are modern minimalist yet very comfortable, and the hotel is well maintained. Guest rooms are spacious with commodious bathrooms. Most of the rooms open onto panoramic views of Gibraltar. The decorator of this hotel was apparently in love with chocolate, so much of the decor ranges from milk chocolate to dark. Most guests are in Algeciras just to wait for the ferry to Tangier.

Calle Hermanos Portilla s/n, 11204 Algeciras. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **95-663-50-60.** Fax 95-663-30-61. 108 units. 58€–110€ double; 69€–115€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Al-Mar Renovated rooms and good, continuing maintenance make the Al-Mar one of the better choices in town. It's near the port, where the ferries leave for Ceuta and Tangier. This large hotel boasts blue-and-white Sevillano and Moorish decor. The midsize guest rooms are well maintained, furnished in an Andalucían style, with good beds and bathrooms with tub/shower combos. A fourth-floor drawing room provides a panoramic view of the Rock.

Av. de la Marina 2–3, 11201 Algeciras. www.hotelalmar.com. ✆ **95-665-46-61.** Fax 95-665-45-01. 192 units. 50€–94€ double; 88€–95€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 7.50€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

beaches: THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

We'd like to report that the Costa del Sol is a paradise for swimmers, but it's not, although it was the allure of beaches that originally put the "sol" in the Costa del Sol beginning in the 1950s.

The roughest beaches—mainly pebbles and shingles—are on the east end at Málaga, Nerja, and Almuñécar. Moving westward, you encounter the gritty, grayish sands of Torremolinos. The best beaches here are at El Bajondillo and La Carihuela (which borders an old fishing village). Another good stretch of beach is along the meandering strip between Carvajal, Los Boliches, and Fuengirola. In addition, two good beaches—El Fuerte and La Fontanilla—lie on either side of Marbella. However, all these beaches tend to be overcrowded, especially in July and August. Crowding is worst on Sundays May through October, when beaches attract family picnickers as well as sunbathers.

All public beaches in Spain are free. Don't expect to find changing facilities—there might be cold showers on the major beaches, but that's it.

Although it's not sanctioned or technically allowed by the government, many women go topless on the beaches. If you indulge, you will be subject to arrest by the Guardia Civil. If you want to bare it all, head for the Costa Natura, about 3km (1¾ miles) west of Estepona. This is the site of the only official nudist colony along the Costa del Sol.

Hotel Reina Cristina ★ In its own park on the southern outskirts of the city (a 10-min. walk south of the rail and bus stations), this historic hotel still stirs an air of mystery and intrigue, having hosted any number of diplomats, spies, and shady traders in the World War II era. A Victorian building accented with turrets, ornate railings, and a facade painted with pastels, the Reina Cristina offers a view of Gibraltar. On the premises are a small English-language library and a semitropical garden. The comfortable, high-ceilinged rooms have excellent furnishings, including comfortable beds and bathrooms.

Paseo de la Conferencia s/n, 11207 Algeciras. www.reinacristina.es. ☎ **95-660-26-22.** Fax 95-660-33-23. 188 units. 65€–150€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; exercise room; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor, 1 outdoor); room service; sauna; 2 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer (in some), Wi-Fi (free).

ESTEPONA ★

85km (53 miles) W of Málaga, 639km (397 miles) S of Madrid, 46km (29 miles) E of Algeciras

A town of Roman origin, Estepona is a budding beach resort, less developed than Marbella or Torremolinos and, for that reason, more likable. Estepona contains an interesting 15th-century parish church, with the ruins of an old aqueduct nearby (at Salduba). Its recreational port is an attraction, as are its **beaches:** Costa Natura, N-340 Km 257, the first legal nude beach of its kind along the Costa del Sol; La Rada, 3km (1¾ miles) long; and El Cristo, only 550m

A beachside market in Estepona.

(1,804 ft.) long. After the sun goes down, stroll along the Paseo Marítimo, a broad avenue with gardens on one side, beach on the other.

In summer, the cheapest places to eat in Estepona are the ***chiringuitos,*** little dining areas set up by local fishermen and their families right on the beach. Naturally they feature seafood, including sole and sardine kabobs grilled over an open fire. You can usually order a fresh salad and fried potatoes; desserts are simple.

After your siesta, head for the tapas bars. You'll find most of them—called ***freidurías*** (fried-fish bars)—at the corner of Calle de los Reyes and La Terraza. Tables spill onto the sidewalks in summer. *Gambas a la plancha* (shrimp) are the favorite (but not the cheapest) tapas to order.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The nearest rail links are in Fuengirola. However, Estepona is on the **bus** route from Algeciras to Málaga. If you're driving, head east from Algeciras along the E-5/N-340.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Av. San Lorenzo 1 (www.estepona.es; ✆ **95-280-20-02**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 1:30pm.

Where to Eat

La Alcaría de Ramos ★ 🎁 SPANISH This inland retreat has been decorated in the style of an old summer house along the Spanish coast, although it sits in the modern urban sprawl around the Hotel TRH Paraiso 12km (7½ miles) east of Estepona village. There's a beautiful terrace garden for outdoor dining as weather permits. Founding chef and owner José Ramos Torres won many national gastronomic competitions and has been creating intriguing variations on traditional recipes since the early 1990s. His sons now run the restaurant, serving Spanish-accented international dishes like *tortas de patatas* (potato cakes). Also try their *crepes de aguacate con gambas* (avocado crepes with shrimp) and *pato asado con puré de manzana y col roja* (grilled duck with apple purée and red cabbage).

Urbanización El Paraíso Vista al Mar 1, N-340 Km 167. www.laalcariaderamos.es. ☎ **95-288-61-78.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–22€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 7:30pm–midnight.

Where to Stay

Although there are a number of modest-priced hotels in the town center, Estepona is known for having some of the most expensive and most luxurious resorts along the coast.

Atalaya Park Golf Hotel & Resort ★★ ☺ Midway between Estepona and Marbella, this modern resort complex attracts sports and nature lovers. Its tranquil beachside location sits amid 8 hectares (20 acres) of subtropical gardens. Spacious rooms, furnished in elegant modern style, are well maintained and inviting. Guests have complimentary use of the hotel's extensive sports facilities, including two magnificent golf courses. Many northern Europeans check in and almost never leave the grounds.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 168.5, 29688 Estepona. www.atalaya-park.es. ☎ **95-288-90-00.** Fax 95-288-90-02. 475 units. 89€–139€ double; 153€–250€ suite; 500€ bungalow. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's center; exercise room; 2 18-hole golf courses; 6 freshwater pools (2 heated indoor); room service; sauna; 9 outdoor tennis courts (6 lit); extensive watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Buenavista 🏷 This comfortable if modest little *residencia* in town beside the coastal road opened in the 1970s. The tiny rooms are likely to be noisy in summer because of heavy traffic nearby. Beds are comfortable, and the neat bathrooms are small. Buses from Marbella stop nearby. Don't be surprised if all the rooms are taken in July and August, as this family-run hotel is popular with middle-class Spaniards.

Av. de España 180, 29680 Estepona. www.buenavistaestepona.com. ☎ **95-280-01-37.** Fax 95-280-55-93. 38 units. 50€–90€ double. DC, MC, V. *In room:* TV.

Hotel TRH Paraíso The impressive Hotel TRH Paraíso is the leading moderately priced establishment in the area. Located between Marbella and Estepona across the highway and back from Costalita Beach, this modern building, constructed in the 1980s, is 12km (7½ miles) from the center of Estepona. The most notable element of the bedrooms is that they open onto balconies fronting the Mediterranean. Otherwise, expect midsize to fairly spacious rooms furnished in a typical resort style—comfortable but not special. Guests can indulge in many nearby activities, including golf. The best feature here is the panoramic bar on the seventh floor with a nude sunning terrace. The hotel also has a children's play area, although it's hardly a reason to check in if you have kids.

Urbanización El Paraíso, Noreste, Carretera de Cádiz Km 167, 29688 Estepona. ☎ **800/465-9936** in the U.S., or 95-288-30-00. Fax 95-288-20-19. 171 units. 134€–198€ double; 165€–272€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 4 bars; babysitting; children's center; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Kempinski Hotel Bahía Marbella-Estepona ★★★ ☺ One of the most luxurious retreats in this part of the Costa del Sol, this modern resort hotel allows you to enjoy a lush, elegant lifestyle. Between the main coastal route and the beach, the Kempinski borrowed heavily from nearby Morocco to create this oasis of charm and grace, with hanging gardens adding a dramatic touch. A member of the Leading Hotels of the World, the property opens onto beautifully landscaped and luxuriant palm-studded gardens fronting the ocean. Bedrooms are airy and spacious, with balconies or private terraces overlooking the sea. This hotel has long been a family favorite because of its children's center featuring an array of activities. English-speaking babysitters are also available.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 159, Playa el Padrón, 29680 Estepona. www.kempinski-spain.com. ☎ **95-280-95-00.** Fax 95-280-95-50. 148 units. 180€–535€ double; 360€–760€ junior suite; from 800€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Garage parking 12€; outside parking free. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; children's center; concierge; exercise room; 4 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; outdoor unlit tennis court; extensive watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (20€ per 24 hr.).

PUERTO BANÚS

8km (5 miles) E of Marbella, 782km (486 miles) S of Madrid

A favorite resort for international celebrities, the coastal village of Puerto Banús was created almost overnight in a traditional Mediterranean style. It's a dreamy place, the very image of what a set designer thinks a Costa del Sol fishing village should look like. Yachts can be moored nearly at your doorstep. Along the harborfront you'll find an array of expensive bars and restaurants. Wandering through the quiet back streets, you'll pass archways and patios with grilles.

To reach the town, you can take one of 15 buses that run daily from Marbella, or you can drive east from Marbella along the E-15.

Where to Eat

Antonio ★ SEAFOOD/INTERNATIONAL This is the best place to sit and watch Puerto Banús's chic port life. Opt for a table on the terrace (if the weather's right), and watch a parade of beautiful people who travel the world in style.

The chic harbor at Puerto Banús.

The first-class cuisine here lives up to the setting, which has lots of modern paintings on the wall, an abundance of greenery, and predominant decorative colors of black and white. Chef Juan Trujillo knows how to balance colors, textures, and flavors, creating such delicious fare as filet mignon, well-flavored pork chops with fries and vegetables, and a tender, moist loin of veal. Many tourists order paella here, but the fried fish is far more authentic and far better eating. The mixed fish usually includes sprats, squid, mullet, and whitebait, all of it deep-fried and served with pink sauce, tartar sauce, or peppery mayonnaise. Platters of this deep-fried fish are especially good when served with a cold salad of roasted peppers and onions dressed with a vinaigrette.

Muelle de Ribera 21. ☎ **95-281-35-36.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–4pm and 7:30–11pm (until 12:30am Aug–Sept).

Dalli's Pasta Factory ITALIAN The meals here, consisting of pasta, pasta, and more pasta served with garlic bread and a carafe of house wine, are a comparative bargain in pricey Puerto Banús. In a setting that's a cross between high tech and Art Deco, you can order nutmeg-flavored ravioli with spinach filling, *penne all'arrabbiata,* lasagna, and several kinds of spaghetti. More filling are the chicken cacciatore and scaloppine of chicken and veal. They are served with—guess what?—a side dish of pasta. The owners, incidentally, are a trio of Roman-born brothers who were reared in England and educated in California. This outlet is part of a chain, open since 1987, with other restaurants in Marbella and Málaga.

Muelle de Ribera. www.pastafactory.com. ☎ **95-281-86-23.** Pastas 10€–18€; meat platters 16€–24€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 7pm–midnight.

Where to Stay

H10 Andalucía Plaza A 1970s structure that was looking tired has been given a complete makeover, emerging as a true 21st-century hotel with a lot of eco-minded upgrades such as solar panels and keycard-activated electricity. The modern decor strives to be avant-garde, with decorative elements ranging from silver-and-gold-accented walls to oversize portraits of models and movie stars such as Marilyn Monroe. The rooms of the West Wing were the most extensively renovated and include modern, stylized underground bedrooms. Rooms come in a wide range from standard and superior doubles to standard and superior junior suites. Guests have free admission to the adjacent Marbella Casino. An underground walkway cuts under the busy streets and puts you on the beach after a 10-minute walk.

Urbanización Nueva Andalucía, Puerto Banús, 29600 Marbella. www.h10hotels.com. ☎ **95-281-20-00.** Fax 95-281-47-92. 400 units. 75€–200€ double; 142€–415€ junior suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; bikes; concierge; exercise room; 3 pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station (in some).

Park Plaza Suites Hotel ★ Yachtsmen often stay here when they need a break from their boat. This sleekly modern hotel lies near the harbor, offering elegant accommodations in spacious double rooms or in glamorous but expensive suites. The rooms are attractively and comfortably furnished. Many restaurants and nightclubs are accessible from here.

Paseo Marítimo de Benabola, 29660 Puerto Banús. www.parkplazasuiteshotel.com. ✆ **95-290-90-00.** Fax 95-281-28-46. 50 units. 190€–377€ double; 250€–713€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. DC, MC, V. Parking 24€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MARBELLA ★★

60km (37 miles) W of Málaga, 45km (28 miles) W of Torremolinos, 80km (50 miles) E of Gibraltar, 76km (47 miles) E of Algeciras, 600km (373 miles) S of Madrid

A long-ago visitor, Queen Isabel, is said to have exclaimed, "*¡Qué mar tan bello!*" ("What a beautiful sea!"), and the name stuck. Even today, although it's packed with tourists and only slightly less popular than Torremolinos, Marbella is still the nicest resort town along the Costa del Sol, with some of the region's best upscale resorts coexisting with budget hotels. Despite the crowds, Marbella retains a vestige of its identity as a pleasant Andalucían town at the foot of the Sierra Blanca. Traces of its past survive in its palatial town hall, medieval ruins, and ancient Moorish walls. Marbella's most charming area is the **Old Quarter** of narrow cobblestone streets and Moorish houses centered on Plaza de los Naranjos.

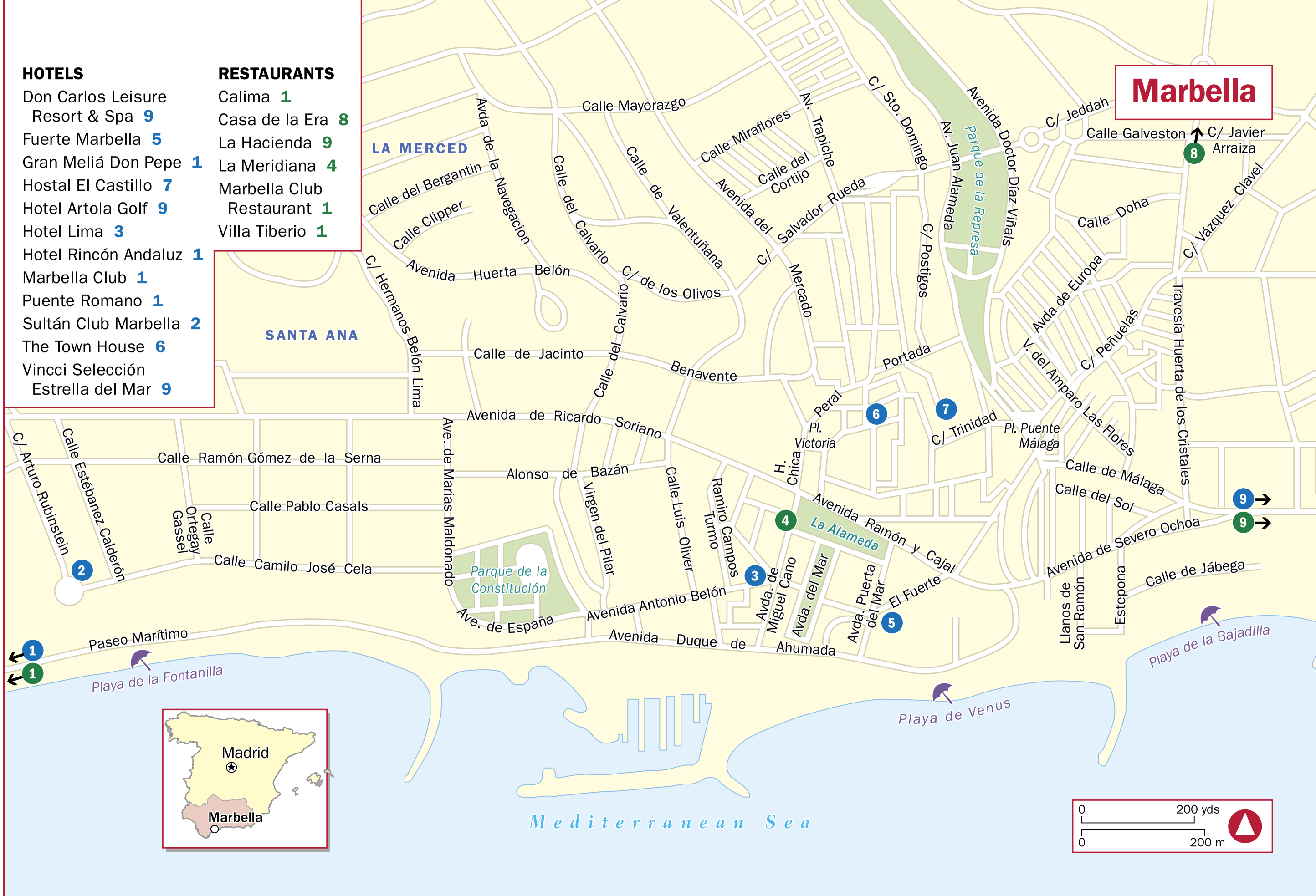
The biggest attractions in Marbella, however, are **El Fuerte** and **La Fontanilla,** the two main beaches. There are other, more secluded beaches, but you need your own transportation to get there.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The main **bus** link is between Málaga and Marbella, with the **Portillo** (www.ctsa-portillo.com; ✆ **90-214-31-44**) running 14 buses a day. The trip takes 1 hour and 25 minutes and costs 5.15€ one-way. Madrid and Barcelona each have three daily buses to Marbella. The bus station is

Marbella's beachside promenade.

Marbella


LA MERCED
SANTA ANA
Calle Mayorazgo
Calle Miraflores
Calle del Cortijo
Av. Trapiche
C/ Sto. Domingo
Av. Juan Alameda
Parque de la Represa
Avenida Doctor Díaz Viñals
C/ Jeddah
Calle Galveston
C/ Javier Arraiza
Calle Doha
C/ Vázquez Clavel
Avda de Europa
C/ Peñuelas
Travesía Huerta de los Cristales
V. del Amparo Las Flores
Pl. Puente Málaga
Calle de Málaga
Calle del Sol
Avenida de Severo Ochoa
Calle de Jábega
Estepona
Llanos de San Ramón
Avda de la Navegacion
Calle del Bergantin
Calle Clipper
Avenida Huerta Belón
Calle del Calvario
C/ de los Olivos
Calle de Valentuñana
Avenida del C/ Salvador Rueda
Mercado
C/ Postigos
Portada
C/ Trinidad
Peral
Pl. Victoria
H. Chica
C/ Hermanos Belón Lima
Calle de Jacinto
Benavente
Avenida de Ricardo Soriano
Calle Ramón Gómez de la Serna
Alonso de Bazán
Virgen del Pilar
Calle Luis Oliver
Ramiro Campos Turmo
Avenida Ramón y Cajal
La Alameda
Avda. de Miguel Cano
Avda. del Mar
Avda. Puerta del Mar
El Fuerte
C/ Arturo Rubinstein
Calle Estébanez Calderón
Calle Ortegay Gassel
Calle Pablo Casals
Calle Camilo José Cela
Ave. de Marias Maldonado
Parque de la Constitución
Ave. de España
Avenida Antonio Belón
Avenida Duque de Ahumada
Paseo Marítimo
Playa de la Fontanilla
Playa de Venus
Playa de la Bajadilla
Mediterranean Sea
Madrid
Marbella
0 200 yds
0 200 m
1
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
9

HOTELS

- Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa 9
- Fuerte Marbella 5
- Gran Meliá Don Pepe 1
- Hostal El Castillo 7
- Hotel Artola Golf 9
- Hotel Lima 3
- Hotel Rincón Andaluz 1
- Marbella Club 1
- Puente Romano 1
- Sultán Club Marbella 2
- The Town House 6
- Vincci Selección Estrella del Mar 9

RESTAURANTS

- Calima 1
- Casa de la Era 8
- La Hacienda 9
- La Meridiana 4
- Marbella Club Restaurant 1
- Villa Tiberio 1

located on the outskirts of Marbella on Avenida Trapiche, a 5-minute ride from the center of town.

If you're driving, Marbella is the first major resort as you head east on the N-340/E-15 from Algeciras.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Glorieta de la Fontanilla s/n (www.marbella.es; ✆ **95-277-14-42**), is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 9pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm. Another tourist office with the same hours is on the Plaza de los Naranjos (✆ **95-277-46-93**).

Where to Eat

EXPENSIVE

Calima ★★★ ANDALUCÍAN/INTERNATIONAL Dani García is the most exciting and innovative chef in Marbella. An example of his inventiveness: He injects liquid nitrogen into olives. When they explode, they become popcornlike morsels, which he then serves with fresh lobster salad. Or he'll take wild baby shrimp and lay them on a slate heated to 300°F, which he garnishes with an olive-oil emulsion and fennel dust. He keeps his menu local, relying on the famous products of the region, not only the regional olive oil but such delights as Andalucían *jamón* (ham) and sherry from Jerez. Meals are enjoyed on a large terrace overlooking the ocean. The fresh Mediterranean and Atlantic seafood is among the best along the coast. You also cannot go wrong with García's cold soups, homemade pastries, and impressive wine selection. After dinner, you can head to the lobby of the Gran Meliá Don Pepe Hotel to **El Admirante** bar, a legendary meeting spot for the rich, the famous, and those who want to meet them. Live music and dancing continue well into the *madrugada* (early morning).

In the Gran Meliá Don Pepe (p. 371). Calle José Meliá. www.gran-melia-don-pepe.com. ✆ **95-276-42-52.** Reservations required. Main courses 22€–40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm.

La Hacienda ★★ INTERNATIONAL La Hacienda, a tranquil choice 13km (8 miles) east of Marbella, serves some of the best food along the Costa del Sol. In cooler months, you can dine in the rustic tavern before an open fireplace. In fair weather, meals are served on a patio partially encircled by open Romanesque arches. Appetizers often include foie gras with lentils and lobster croquettes. For a main dish, try roast guinea hen with cream, minced raisins, and port; or beef carpaccio with duck liver. The flavorful food is prepared with the freshest ingredients and presented with style. An iced soufflé finishes the meal nicely.

Urbanización Hacienda Las Chapas, Carretera de Cádiz Km 193. www.restaurantelahacienda.com. ✆ **95-283-12-67.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–28€; fixed-price menu 45€–68€. AE, DC, MC, V. Summer daily 8:30pm–midnight; winter Wed–Sun 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Nov 12–Dec 7.

La Meridiana ★★ ITALIAN/ANDALUCÍAN If it's not the most sophisticated restaurant along the Costa del Sol, La Meridiana certainly ranks among the most romantic with its garden terrace and glass-enclosed porch. It also serves some of the best food. The menu of Italian and Andalucían specialties changes four times yearly. Some of the most tantalizing items likely to be featured on the menu include wild sea bass seasoned with thyme and served with a prawn sauce, as well as roast monkfish with a red-pepper preserve on a bed of onion purée. You might also order the house specialty, roast duck flambé in Calvados with truffles, fried onions, dates, and dried figs. **La Notte** (p. 369), a nightclub, is on a nearby terrace and is a hot spot along the coast for late-night revelers.

Camino de la Cruz s/n. www.lameridiana.es. ☎ **95-277-61-90.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–28€; fixed-price menu 59€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8pm–midnight.

Marbella Club Grill ★★ INTERNATIONAL The Marbella Club has reorganized its dining into several discrete venues, all under the talented direction of executive chef Juan Gálvez. Most guests take lunch at the bountiful buffet at the Beach Club. Diners seeking out the avant-garde stylings of contemporary Spanish cuisine gravitate to the **MC Café.** The old standby, however, remains the Marbella Club Grill, with seating both indoors and outside on the terrace. You dine amid blooming flowers, flickering candles, and strains of live music—perhaps a Spanish classical guitarist, a small chamber orchestra playing 19th-century classics, or a South American vocalist. The contemporary pan-European menu changes with the season. You might begin with a lobster cocktail with diced mango–and–honey truffle dressing, or perhaps a spicy coconut soup with lemon grass. Specialties include beef entrecôte with a mushroom-pepper sauce, and seared tuna with shiitake fried rolls and ginger dressing.

In the Marbella Club (p. 370), Bulevar Príncipe Alfonso von Hohenlohe s/n. www.marbellaclub.com. ☎ **95-282-22-11.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 27€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Summer daily 9pm–12:30am; winter daily 8–11:30pm.

Villa Tiberio ★ ITALIAN/INTERNATIONAL Villa Tiberio's proximity to the upscale Marbella Club (a 5-min. walk away; p. 370) ensures a flow of visitors from that elite hotel. In what was originally built as a private villa during the 1960s, it serves the most innovative Italian food in the region and attracts the many north European expatriates living nearby. Appetizers include thinly sliced smoked beef with fresh avocados and oil-and-lemon dressing, and *fungi fantasía* (a large wild mushroom stuffed with seafood and lobster sauce). Especially tempting is the *pappardelle alla Sandro*—large flat noodles studded with chunks of lobster, tomato, and garlic. Other versions come with cream, caviar, and smoked salmon. Main dishes include sea bass with cherry tomatoes, basil, and black truffle oil; duck baked with orange and Curaçao liqueur; and *osso buco* (braised veal shanks).

Carretera de Cádiz Km 178.5. www.villatiberio.com. ☎ **95-277-17-99.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7:30pm–12:30am. Closed Jan.

MODERATE

Casa de la Era ★ 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN This little discovery outside Marbella is in a rustic house, very much in the style of an old hacienda with internal patios decorated with plants, trees, and flowers. Wooden furniture only adds to the old-fashioned look, as do hanging hams and ceramics used for decoration. In addition, the restaurant offers a beautiful terrace. On a full night the place is a whirl of color and activity. The charming waiters rather proudly bring out the chef's specialties.

Some of the best of the chef's specialties include noodles with anglerfish and baby clams, as well as baby goat from the mountains above Málaga. Codfish is a savory dish here when cooked in a spicy fresh tomato sauce. Other good dishes include free-range chicken stewed with Montilla wine and fresh garlic, as well as rabbit pan-cooked with fresh thyme and served with almond sauce.

Finca El Chorraero, Carretera de Ojén Km 0.5. www.casadelaera.com. ☎ **95-277-06-25.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sept–June Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8–11pm; July–Aug daily 8–11pm.

A MARBELLA *tasca*-CRAWL

To really rub shoulders with the locals and experience a taste of Spain, take your meals in the tapas bars. Marbella boasts more hole-in-the-wall tapas bars than virtually any other resort town in southern Spain. Even if you set out with a specific place in mind, you'll likely be distracted en route by a newer, older, bigger, smaller, brighter, or just more interesting joint you want to try. That's half the fun.

Prices and hours are remarkably consistent: The coffeehouse that opens at 7am will switch to wine and tapas when the first patron asks for it (sometimes shortly after breakfast), and then continue through the day dispensing wine, sherry, and, more recently, bottles of beer. On average, tapas cost 3€ to 10€, but some foreign visitors configure them into *platos combinados.*

Tapas served along the Costa del Sol are principally Andalucían in origin, with an emphasis on seafood. The most famous plate, *fritura malagueña,* consists of fried fish based on the catch of the day. Sometimes *ajo blanco,* a garlicky local version of gazpacho made with almonds, is served, especially in summer. Fried squid or octopus is another favorite, as are little Spanish-style herb-flavored meatballs. *Tortilla* (an omelet, often with potatoes) is the most popular egg dish. Other well-known tapas include pungent tuna, grilled shrimp, *piquillos rellenos* (red peppers stuffed with fish), *bacalao* (salt cod), and mushrooms sautéed in olive oil and garlic.

Tapas bars line many of the narrow streets of Marbella's historic core, with rich pickings around Calle del Perral and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Calle Miguel Cana. In August especially, when you want to escape wall-to-wall people and the heat and noise of the Old Town, head for one of the shoreline restaurants and tapas bars called *chiringuitos.* All serve local specialties, and you can order a full meal, a snack, tapas, or a drink. **Restaurante Los Sardinales,** Playa de los Alicates (www.lossardinales.com; ✆ **95-283-70-12**) serves some of the best sangria in the area. Another good bet is **Chiringuito La Pesquera,** Playa Marbellamar (www.lapesquera.com; ✆ **95-277-03-38**), where you can order a plate of fresh grilled sardines.

Shopping

Some other Andalucían village may inspire you to buy handicrafts (particularly pottery, woodcarvings, or wrought iron), but Marbella's international glamour might incite in you so much insecurity about your wardrobe that you'll want to rush out to accessorize. Should you suddenly feel underdressed, head for the Old Town, where there are many fashion outlets.

If art is your passion, tour the galleries that pepper the town. You'll spot high-rolling investors picking up contemporary treasures on shopping sprees. One of Marbella's most appealing art galleries lies in the Old Town: **Galleria d'Arte Van Gestel,** Plaza de los Naranjos 11 (✆ **95-277-48-19**). And if your search for fine art carries over to **Puerto Banús,** consider the contemporary artwork displayed at **Sammer Gallery,** Av. de Julio Iglesias 3, Las Terrazas de Banús, Local 10–16 (www.sammergallery.es; ✆ **95-281-29-95**). If you'd like to purchase some of Andalucía's regional ceramics, your best bet is **Cerámica San Nicolás,** Plaza de la Iglesia 1 (✆ **95-277-05-46**).

On Saturday morning, forget the shops and head with the locals to **Nueva Andalucía flea market.** Everything is likely to be on sale, from Spanish leather goods to local pottery and embroideries.

Entertainment & Nightlife

There's more international wealth hanging out in the watering holes of Marbella, and a wider choice of glam (or pseudo-glam) discos, than virtually anywhere else in the south of Spain. Foremost among these is **Olivia Valere** on Carretera Istan, N-340 Km 0.8 (www.oliviavalere.com; ✆ **95-282-88-61**); it's open every night from midnight to 7am and charges a cover of 30€. A fashionable place to rendezvous at night, **La Notte,** Camino de la Cruz s/n (✆ **95-277-76-25**), stands next to the swank La Meridiana restaurant (p. 366). Decorated in a style intended to evoke Morocco, La Notte offers a terrace and an elegant atmosphere with rich decoration. Live music and shows are presented here during its nightly hours from 12:30 to 4am. It is closed from November to December 21.

If you're in the heart of historic Marbella, enjoy a night in the bodegas and taverns of the Old Town. Conveniently located adjacent to one of the town's widest thoroughfares is **Bodega La Venensia,** Plaza de los Olivos s/n (www.bodegaslavenencia.com; ✆ **95-277-99-63**). Its wide choice of sherries, wines, and tapas draws lots of chattering patrons. **Vinacoteca La Cartuja,** Plaza Joaquín Gómez Agüera 2 (✆ **95-277-52-03**) is dedicated to offering as many Spanish wines as possible. Drinking here provides the opportunity to compare vintages from the surrounding region.

Although hardly authentic, Marbella's best flamenco is offered at **Tablao Flamenco Ana María,** Av. Severo Ochoa 24 (✆ **95-277-56-46**). It's a good start for foreign visitors who speak limited Spanish. The long, often-crowded bar area sells tapas, wine, sherry, and a selection of more international libations. On the stage, singers, dancers, and musicians perform flamenco and popular songs. This is late-night entertainment—the doors don't open until 11:30pm, and the crowd really gets going between midnight and 3am. Cover (which includes one drink) is 25€.

Seven kilometers (4⅓ miles) west of Marbella, near Puerto Banús, **Casino Marbella,** Bajo Hotel Andalucía Plaza, Urbanización Nueva Andalucía (www.

casinomarbella.com; ✆ **95-281-40-00**), is on the lobby level of the Bajo Hotel Andalucía Plaza resort complex at Urbanización Nueva. Unlike the region's competing casino, at the Hotel Torrequebrada, the Marbella does not offer cabaret or nightclub shows. The focus is on gambling, and mobs of visitors from northern Europe come here. Individual games include French and American roulette, blackjack, punto y banco, craps, and chemin de fer. Hours are daily noon to 5am for slot machines, daily 8pm to 4am for the main body of the casino. Admission is 5€.

You can dine before or after gambling in the **Casino Restaurant,** a few steps above the gaming floor. Jackets are not required for men, but shorts and T-shirts are frowned upon. The casino is open daily from 8pm to 2 or 4am. A passport is required for admission.

Where to Stay

Because the setting is ideal, some of the best hotels along the Costa del Sol are in Marbella.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Marbella Club ★★★ This is the grande dame of all Costa del Sol resorts, and until a few equally chic hotels were built, the snobbish Marbella Club reigned almost without equal as the exclusive hangout of aristocrats and tycoons. Established in 1954, the resort sprawls over a landscaped property that slopes from its roadside reception area down to the private beach. Composed of small, ecologically friendly clusters of garden pavilions, bungalows, and small-scale annexes, the Marbella Club has some of the loveliest gardens along the coast. Hotel rooms along the Costa del Sol don't come much better than these varied and spacious choices, often with canopy beds. Rooms have either private balconies or terraces. The clientele is discreet, international, elegant, and appreciative of the resort's small scale and superb service.

Bulevar Príncipe Alfonso von Hohenlohe, 29600 Marbella. www.marbellaclub.com. ✆ **800-448-8355** in the U.S., or 95-282-22-11. Fax 95-282-98-84. 121 units. 300€–920€ double; from 540€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; bikes; concierge; 18-hole golf course; 3 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Puente Romano ★★ This hotel was originally built as a cluster of vacation apartments, which influenced the attention to detail and the surrounding landscaping. In the early 1970s, a group of entrepreneurs transformed it into one of the most unusual hotels in the south of Spain, second only to the Marbella Club. Although it sits close to the frenetic coastal highway midway between Marbella and Puerto Banús, and some critics have dismissed it as "more flash than class," it still enjoys a loyal following. Inside the complex, arbor-covered walkways lead past cascading water, masses of vines, and a subtropical garden. The spacious Andalucían-Mediterranean guest rooms have semisheltered balconies.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 177, 29600 Marbella. www.puenteromano.com. ✆ **95-282-09-00.** Fax 95-277-57-66. 285 units. 245€–426€ double; 530€–950€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Limited free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; children's center; concierge; 18-hole golf course (nearby); health club; 3 outdoor freshwater pools; room service; sauna; 10 outdoor tennis courts (lit); watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player (in some), DVD player (in some), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (19€ per 24 hr.).

EXPENSIVE

Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa ★★ One of the most dramatic hotels on the coast, the Don Carlos rises on a set of angled stilts above a pine forest. Between the hotel and its manicured beach—the best in Marbella—are 4 hectares (9¾ acres) of award-winning gardens. With cascades of water and thousands of subtropical plants, they require a full-time staff of 22 gardeners. Each of the spacious bedrooms has lacquered furniture. The hotel often hosts small business conferences.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 192, 29604 Marbella. www.hoteldoncarlos.com. ☎ **95-276-88-00.** Fax 95-283-34-29. 243 units. 125€–392€ double; 304€–708€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; 2 outdoor freshwater pools; room service; spa; 12 outdoor tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, movie library, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.).

Fuerte Marbella ★ ☺ We'd give the edge to Gran Meliá Don Pepe (see below), but of the hotels within Marbella proper, this resort is in a neck-to-neck race for supremacy with the similarly named Fuerte Miramar. Fronting a good sandy beach, the hotel opened back in Marbella's jet-setting heyday. It is surrounded by some of the best-maintained and most beautiful hotel gardens along the coast. Decorators have been busy here, matching the draperies and adding splashes of color in the varied wallpapers. Lush carpeting, creamy tones, and extensive use of comfortable wooden furniture complete the look. Rooms, for the most part, are midsize, although some are spacious. A **beach restaurant** specializes in grilled fish based on the catch of the day. The staff here is helpful, and the amenities are excellent.

Av. del Fuerte, 29600 Marbella. www.fuertehoteles.com. ☎ **800/448-8355** in the U.S., or 95-286-15-00. Fax 95-282-44-11. 263 units. 99€–245€ double; from 265€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfers; baby sitting; 18-hole golf course (nearby); health club; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (in some; free).

Gran Meliá Don Pepe ★★ Located on the beach a short stroll from the town center, this chain-run hotel is one of Marbella's best resorts, offering taste, elegance, and grand comfort. The hotel is known for its spacious, beautiful rooms opening onto views of the Mediterranean, as well as for its tropical gardens and fine dining. Most of the guest rooms have a terrace or balcony with a sea view. At night, the hotel features shows and live music—often including flamenco. Guests get free entrance to the Casino de Marbella.

José Meliá, 29600 Marbella. www.gran-melia-don-pepe.com. ☎ **95-277-03-00.** Fax 95-277-99-54. 201 units. 164€–480€ double; from 380€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; health club; Jacuzzi; 3 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit); Wi-Fi (4€ per hr. in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchenette (in some), minibar.

Sultán Club Marbella On the outskirts of Marbella, a 10-minute drive from the center, this apartment-hotel is in the residential district of Milla de Oro, just a short walk to the beach. It opened in 1997 and is meant to evoke luxury living such as the sultans of old enjoyed. The interior brims with tropical plants and fountains. The apartments contain one or two bedrooms, each with a large balcony, a small dining room, and a fully equipped kitchen.

Calle Arturo Rubinstein, 29600 Marbella. www.monarquehoteles.es. ✆ **95-277-15-62.** Fax 95-277-55-58. 76 units. 104€–255€ 1-bedroom apt; 130€–321€ 2-bedroom apt. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; 2 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Vincci Selección Estrella del Mar ★★ A sumptuous retreat for the hedonist, this deluxe hotel lies outside Marbella in a tony section known as Elvira–Las Chapas, which is near one of the best beaches along the Costa del Sol. It lies 8km (5 miles) from the center of Marbella and is built in a modern Mediterranean style with a strong North African design influence. The resort complex is graced with gardens and fountains, a quartet of swimming pools, and a landscape filled with lollypop pines.

This is certainly no cookie-cutter hotel. The decorative objects came from Lebanon, Egypt, and India, and are combined with Art Deco elements along with ornamental tiles. Bedrooms are spacious and furnished with great modern style, using for the most part canopied beds. The superior doubles contain a sitting-room area with a sofa or two armchairs. All rooms have a large terrace facing the sea.

Urbanización Estrella del Mar, A-7 Km 190.5, 29604 Marbella. www.vinccihoteles.com. ✆ **95-105-39-70.** Fax 95-105-39-80. 137 units. 90€–230€ double; 182€–550€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; concierge; exercise room; 4 outdoor pools; room service; watersports equipment/rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Hotel Artola Golf ★ Located between Fuengirola and Marbella, .8km (½ mile) from the beach, this charming place was originally an old staging post for travelers en route to Gibraltar. In the 1970s, it was converted into an inn. The architecture is typically Andalucían, with a stucco-and-wood facade under a terra-cotta roof. A garden and patio surround the building. The interior has retained some of its historical aura with colorful tiles plus decorative wooden wall panels and beams. The midsize rooms are comfortably furnished and tastefully decorated, often with Moorish details.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 194, 29600 Marbella. www.hotelartola.com. ✆ **95-283-13-90.** Fax 95-283-04-50. 31 units. 50€–110€ double; 70€–155€ suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; 9-hole golf course; outdoor pool; room service, Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C (in some), TV.

Hotel Rincón Andaluz ☺ In a stylish area of Marbella 1km (⅔ mile) from Puerto Banús, this hotel was built to evoke a *pueblo andaluz* (Andalucían village). The resort lies only 500m (1,640 ft.) from a good beach. Located in a park, the low-level, rustic-style buildings form an ideal retreat. The large rooms are tastefully decorated and fully equipped, and all units have at least a small living room (those in the suites are larger). Ground-floor rooms have direct access to the gardens; others open onto balconies.

Carretera de Cádiz Km 173, 29660 Marbella. www.hotelrinconandaluz.com. ✆ **95-281-15-17.** Fax 95-281-41-80. 315 units. 60€–140€ double; from 220€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; children's center; exercise room; 3 freshwater outdoor pools (1 heated); room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

The Town House ★★ 🎁 Deep in the heart of the Old Quarter, this former private home has been tastefully converted into the town's most romantic-looking boutique hotel. Of all the hotels in Marbella, this one comes the closest to evoking life in a private town house from yesterday, yet it has been completely modernized with today's comforts. The day begins with morning coffee on the roof terrace and comes to an end with a cold drink, perhaps a cocktail, on that same terrace as the sun sets. The house lies some 300m (984 ft.) from the boardwalk along the beach (which extends all the way to Puerto Banús, incidentally). The midsize bedrooms were designed with exquisite care, with antique objects combined with contemporary design. Some of the objects you might admire, such as candleholders or pictures, can be purchased.

Plaza Tetuán, Calle Alderete 7, 29600 Marbella. www.townhouse.nu. ☎/fax **95-290-17-91.** 9 units. 125€–145€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV.

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal El Castillo 🏷 At the foot of the castle in the narrow streets of the Old Quarter, this small hotel opens onto a minuscule triangular area used by the adjoining convent and school as a playground. There's a small, covered courtyard. The spartan rooms are scrubbed clean and have well-maintained bathrooms. No breakfast is served, and the staff speaks only a little English.

Plaza San Bernabé 2, 29601 Marbella. www.hotelelcastillo.com. ☎ **95-277-17-39.** Fax 95-282-11-98. 25 units. 38€–52€ double. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Lima 🏷 Tucked in a residential area right off the N-340/E-15 and near the beach, the Lima is more secluded than other hotels nearby. The modern structure features plain rooms with Spanish provincial furnishings and private balconies.

Av. Antonio Belón, 29600 Marbella. www.hotellimamarbella.com. ☎ **95-277-05-00.** Fax 95-286-30-91. 64 units. 47€–100€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; bikes; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.).

Where to Stay Near Marbella

Castillo de Monda ★ 🎁 In 1996, a group of entrepreneurs transformed the crumbling ruins of an 8th-century Moorish fortress into this showplace conference hotel in a sleepy "white" village 12km (7½ miles) north of Marbella. El Castillo de Monda adds a soothing note of calm and quiet to a region that grows glitzier by the year. Rooms are beautifully maintained, generous in size, and traditionally furnished. Before making a reservation, be sure the rest of the hotel isn't already booked for a wedding. (It's a popular venue for nuptials.)

El Castillo s/n, 29110 Monda (Málaga). www.castillodemonda.es. ☎ **95-245-71-42.** Fax 95-245-73-36. 25 units. 114€–224€ double; 210€–260€ suite. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; outdoor pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer.

Hotel El Refugio del Juanar ★ 🎁 The former hunting lodge of King Alfonso XIII has been turned into this hotel and restaurant, an ideal retreat from Marbella. Over the years, it has attracted aristocrats and politicians, including Charles de Gaulle. The *refugio* lies 4km (2½ miles) from the town of Ojén, which is 10km (6¼ miles) north of Marbella. In the heart of the Sierra Blanca, the inn stands at the southern edge of a mountainous wilderness, Serranía de Ronda, which is inhabited by wild ibex. Bedrooms are rather standard but comfortable, each midsize. An old-fashioned, Spanish-hacienda style prevails, with iron headboards and flowery fabrics. A log fire roars downstairs in winter, and six of the rooms have their own fireplaces.

Sierra Blanca s/n, 29610 Ojén. www.juanar.com. ✆ **95-288-10-00.** Fax 95-288-10-01. 26 units. 60€–120€ double; 185€–220€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar.

FUENGIROLA & LOS BOLICHES

32km (20 miles) W of Málaga, 104km (65 miles) E of Algeciras, 574km (357 miles) S of Madrid

The former fishing towns of Fuengirola and Los Boliches lie halfway between the more famous resorts of Marbella and Torremolinos. A promenade along the water stretches some 4km (2½ miles). Less developed Los Boliches is just .8km (½ mile) from Fuengirola. These towns don't have the facilities or drama of Torremolinos and Marbella, but except for two major luxury hotels, Fuengirola and Los Boliches are cheaper. This has attracted hordes of budget-conscious European tourists.

The best beaches—**Santa Amalja, Carvajal,** and **Las Gaviotas**—are broad, clean, and sandy. Everybody goes to the big **flea market** at Fuengirola on Tuesday. It's the largest along the coast. Many British retirees who live in the holiday apartments nearby attend this sprawling market, later stopping in at one of the Irish or British pubs for a pint, just like they used to do back home.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Fuengirola is on the main Costa del Sol **bus** route from either Algeciras in the west or Málaga in the east. Contact **Portillo,** Av. Condes de San Isidro s/n, in Fuengirola (www.ctsa-portillo.com; ✆ **90-214-31-44**). The one-way fare is 1.80€ from Málaga to Fuengirola, 10€ one-way from Algeciras to Fuengirola. If you're driving from Marbella, take the N-340/E-15 east.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Paseo Jesús Santos Rein 6 (www.fuengirola.org; ✆ **95-246-76-25**), is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday 9:30am to 1:30pm.

Exploring Fuengirola & Los Boliches

Castillo Sohail ☺ CASTLE Fuengirola may have been built up as a discount beach resort town, but it retains this remnant of a Moorish past. The Almohad dynasty built this castle in the 12th century on the hill overlooking the beach where both Romans and Carthaginians settled. To find it, just walk east along Paseo Marítimo toward the elegant cable-stay bridge over the Río Fuengirola. The castle was modified many times after it fell into Christian hands (the armies of Isabel and Fernando) in 1485. Restored by Fuengirola trade school students, it is surrounded by beautiful green lawns.

Paseo Marítimo, s/n. ✆ **68-585-52-46.** 3€ adults, 2€ seniors and children. Spring and fall daily 10am–6:30pm; summer daily 9:30am–9pm; winter daily 10:30am–6pm.

Fuengirola Zoo ★★★ ☺ ZOO Now one of Europe's model zoo facilities, this sensitive presentation of animals in three different ecosystems is easily the top attraction on the Costa del Sol. There are no cages, but design keeps animals and humans apart with moats and landscape features. The zoo replicates the tropical rainforests of Madagascar, equatorial Africa, and Southeast Asia with 1,300 animals representing 140 species.

Calle Camilo José Cela 8–10. www.zoofuengirola.com. ☎ **95-266-63-01.** 16€ adults; 11€ ages 3–9 and seniors. Winter daily 10am–6pm; summer daily 10am–8pm.

Where to Eat

La Langosta ★ INTERNATIONAL/SEAFOOD Just a stone's throw from Fuengirola and 2 blocks from the beach, La Langosta is one of the better restaurants in the area. The Art Deco dining room is a welcome relief from the ever-present Iberian rustic style of so many other restaurants. The menu features a variety of seafood, as well as Spanish dishes like *gazpacho andaluz* and prawns in a curry sauce. Spiny lobster and flat lobster are prepared thermidor style—or any other style you care to order. Mussels come in a savory saffron cream sauce. Often the best plate is the simplest: grilled Dover sole with boiled potatoes and fresh butter. The staff is particularly well trained and helpful.

Calle Francisco Cano 1, Los Boliches. www.restaurantelalangosta.net. ☎ **95-247-50-49.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 14€–30€; tasting menu 31€–40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7–11:30pm. Closed Dec–Jan.

Monopol ☺ SEAFOOD With its nautical decor and blue-and-white Mediterranean color scheme, Monopol is popular with the mature yachting set, who appreciate the quiet formality. The friendly and professional waitstaff are a delight, and the kitchen is laser-focused on seafood. Lobster can be cooked several ways, and a kettle of well-flavored mussels is always a delight. Tantalizing seafood dishes include crab au gratin, grilled prawns, and angelfish, the latter with a delicate saffron flavoring. A kids' menu is available on request.

Palangreros 7. ☎ **95-247-44-48.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9.90€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7–11:30pm. Closed July 15–Sept 1.

Where to Stay

Hotel Villa de Laredo 🎁 With a panoramic site on the waterfront promenade, this good-value inn lies a block east of the main port. One of the more modern hotels in town, it benefits from a central location without even attempting to equal the luxury offered by fancy resorts on the periphery. Bedrooms are newly styled and comfortably furnished, containing small bathrooms. Try for one of the rooms with a small terrace opening onto the seafront promenade. The featured attraction of the villa is its rooftop pool, opening onto views of the Paseo Marítimo.

Paseo Marítimo Rey de España 42, 29640 Fuengirola. www.hotelvilladelaredo.es. ☎ **95-247-76-89.** Fax 95-247-79-50. 74 units. 62€–99€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking nearby 9€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Las Pirámides This resort, a favorite of northern Europeans and tour groups, is a citylike compound adjacent to the beach. It consists of two buildings connected by a hall, each with 10 floors. All the rooms are good size and have slick modern styling as well as terraces. Bathrooms contain tub/shower combos. On the beach, guests enjoy a wide range of watersports, including pedal boating, water-skiing, windsurfing, parasailing, boating, and fishing. The reception desk at the hotel can also point you to the best of the 52 area golf courses, and horseback riding is available near the hotel. You can also rent bikes nearby.

Calle Miguel Márquez 43, 29640 Fuengirola. www.hotellaspiramides.com. ✆ **95-247-06-00.** Fax 95-258-32-97. 320 units. 63€–110€ double; 80€–151€ triple. AE, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 5 bars; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; extensive watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (6€ per hr. in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MIJAS ★

30km (19 miles) W of Málaga, 585km (364 miles) S of Madrid

MIJAS
BURRO TAXI
Nº 19

A "burro taxi" in Mijas.

Just 8km (5 miles) north of coastal road N-340/E-15, this village is known as "White Mijas" because of its marble-white Andalucían-style houses. Mijas is at the foot of a mountain range near the turnoff to Fuengirola, and from its lofty height—450m (1,476 ft.) above sea level—you get a panoramic view of the Mediterranean.

Celts, Phoenicians, and Moors preceded today's tourist throngs to Mijas. The town itself, rather than a specific monument, is the attraction. The easiest way to get around its cobblestone streets is to walk, but the most colorful is to rent a burro taxi. If you consider Mijas overrun with souvenir shops, head for the park at the top of Cuesta de la Villa, where you'll see the ruins of a **Moorish fortress** dating from 833. If you're in town for a fiesta, you'll attend events in the country's only square bullring. Every Saturday from May into October, busloads of bullfight fans descend on Mijas for the weekly *corridas.*

There's frequent bus service to Mijas from the terminal at Fuengirola, 30 minutes away. To drive from Fuengirola, take the Mijas road north.

Where to Stay & Eat

El Padrastro ★ INTERNATIONAL Part of the fun of dining at the town's best restaurant is getting here. You go to the cliff side of town and, if you're athletic, walk up 77 steps; alternatively, you can take the elevator to the highest point. El Padrastro serves Spanish-inflected contemporary international cuisine on its covered terraces with panoramic views of the coast. You can choose whether to eat inexpensively (including a surprisingly good hamburger or red tuna tacos with a garlic salsa) or elaborately (a paella-like rice dish with Atlantic lobster, or chateaubriand with a bottle of the best Ribero del Duero red).

Av. del Compás 20–22. http://elpadrastro.com. ✆ **95-248-50-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4pm and 7–11:30pm.

Hotel TRH Mijas ★ One of the most inviting hotels on the Costa del Sol dates from 1970, when it was built on steeply sloping land at the edge of town. This Andalucían-inspired block of white walls and flowering terraces is comfortable and flooded with sun. There are sweeping views over the Mediterranean from most of the public areas and the tiny but comfortable rooms. The staff is tactful and hardworking.

Urbanización Tamisa 2, 29650 Mijas. www.trhhoteles.com. ✆ **95-248-58-00.** Fax 95-248-58-25. 204 units. 50€–160€ double; 248€–280€ suite. DC, MC, V. Parking 9€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

La Cala Resort ★★ Golfers journey to Mijas just to stay at this stylishly contemporary inland resort. The golf courses at La Cala are its main attraction. La Cala North (par 73) and La Cala South (par 72) were both designed by the noted golf architect Cabell B. Robinson, who cited the Costa del Sol terrain as his most challenging project. Even if you're not a golfer, this is one of the finest hotels in the area, unless you prefer to be right on the sea rather than 7km (4⅓ miles) away. Guest rooms are midsize to spacious, attractively furnished in a contemporary mode, with superb bathrooms. Every unit opens onto a large balcony overlooking the fairways and greens and the Mijas hills beyond. Bed and breakfast rates drop as low as 50€ in the dead of winter.

La Cala de Mijas, 29649 Mijas. www.lacala.com. ✆ **95-266-90-16.** Fax 95-266-90-13. 107 units. 169€–250€ double; 219€–300€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfers (80€); babysitting; exercise room; 3 18-hole golf courses; 2 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

TORREMOLINOS

15km (9⅓ miles) W of Málaga, 122km (76 miles) E of Algeciras, 568km (353 miles) S of Madrid

This Mediterranean beach resort is the most famous in Spain. It's known as a melting pot for international visitors, mostly Europeans and Americans. Many relax here after a whirlwind tour of Europe—the living is easy, the people are fun, and there are no historical monuments to visit. A sleepy fishing village until the 1950s, Torremolinos has been engulfed in cement-walled resort hotels, and that overconstruction makes "Torrie" one of Europe's vacation bargains.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The nearby Málaga airport (p. 381) serves Torremolinos, and frequent **trains** also run from the terminal at Málaga. For train information, log on to www.renfe.es, or call ✆ **90-232-03-20**. **Buses** run frequently between Málaga and Torremolinos; call ✆ **90-214-31-44** for schedules.

If you're driving, take the N-340/E-15 west from Málaga or the N-340/E-15 east from Marbella.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Plaza Independencia (✆ **95-237-42-31**). It's open daily 8am to 3pm (in winter Mon–Fri 9:30am–2:30pm).

Where to Eat

Where Torremolinos ends and Benalmádena-Costa to the west begins is hard to say. The two resorts seem to merge (although driving east, there *is* an ancient sign

Beachfront umbrellas in Torremolinos.

welcoming visitors to Torrie). Benalmádena offers some of the better restaurants in the area.

A good spot to try in **Torremolinos** is the food court at **La Nogalera,** the major gathering place between the coast road and the beach. Head down Calle del Cauce to this compound of modern whitewashed Andalucían buildings. Open to pedestrian traffic only, it's a maze of passageways, courtyards, and patios for eating and drinking. You can find everything from sandwiches to pizza to Belgian waffles to scrambled eggs.

If you want at least some relief from the high-rises and honky-tonks, head to Torrie's western edge at **La Carihuela,** where you'll find some great bargain restaurants. Walk down toward the sea to reach the village.

Casa Juan ★ SEAFOOD In a modern-looking building in La Carihuela, this 170-seat seafood restaurant is about 1.6km (1 mile) west of Torremolinos's center and a stone's throw from the water. Menu items include selections from a lavish display of fish and shellfish prominently positioned near the entrance. You might try *mariscada de mariscos* (shellfish), a fried platter of mixed fish, cod, kabobs of meat or fish, or paella. Of special note is *lubina a la sal*—sea bass roasted in a casing of coarse salt, broken open at your table and deboned in front of you.

Calle San Gines 18–20. www.losmellizos.net/casajuan. ☎ **95-237-35-12.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4:30pm and 7:30–11:30pm. Closed Dec.

El Figón de Montemar ★ ASTURIAN/ANDALUCÍAN One of the more unusual restaurants in the area, Figón de Montemar lies near the beach, and like so many others it's decorated with glass, tiles, and assorted nautical paraphernalia, but its food is equal parts Andalucían and Asturian. Menus are based on what was good and fresh at the market that day, including the daily seafood catch. Small-boat fishermen also bring in their catch of red mullet, whiting, and other small fish as the day goes on. The kitchen seasons mountain lamb with garlic and spices, roasts it to perfection, and serves the dish with mint sauce. *Merluza* (hake) is oven roasted with fresh herbs, and fresh codfish is prepared in a delightful red sauce. The Asturian bean-and-pork specialty, *fabada,* is available as a special on Wednesdays, and the traditional Easter week feast dish of salt cod and garbanzos is served on Fridays.

Av. Espada 101. www.elfigondemontemar.com. ✆ **95-237-26-88.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–24€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed Jan 10–Feb 10.

Ventorrillo de la Perra 🎁 ANDALUCÍAN/SPANISH This inn, from 1785, is one of the oldest restaurants along the Costa del Sol. It at least hints at the way the Costa del Sol was before the Franco government decided to convert the coast into a tourist destination. The restaurant is located about a 15-minute walk inland from the main port. You can eat on a shaded patio, ideal on a summer day, or head for the intimate dining room with its cozy bar. Andalucían cured hams hang from the ceiling. You may think you know what gazpacho is until you order *gazpacuelo malagueño,* which is actually served warm. It's a combination of both rice and potatoes, enlivened with fresh shrimp. Another typical soup specialty is *ajo blanco,* a cold almond soup, heavy on the garlic. Almonds appear again in a sauce with your order of rabbit (*conejo*). Lamb stars in several dishes, and most fish preparations are based on the catch of the day.

Av. Constitución 85 Km 13, Arroyo de la Miel. www.ventorrillodelaperra.es. ✆ **95-244-19-66.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Torremolinos has more nightlife than any other spot along the Costa del Sol. The earliest action is always at the bars, which stay lively most of the night, serving drinks and tapas until at least 3am. Sometimes it seems that in Torremolinos there are more bars than people, so you shouldn't have trouble finding one you like. Note that some bars are open during the day as well.

La Bodega, San Miguel 40 (✆ **95-238-73-37**), relies on its colorful clientele and the quality of its tapas to draw customers, who seem to rank this place above the dozens of other *tascas* in this popular tourist zone. Many guests come here for lunch or dinner, making a satisfying meal from the plentiful bar food. You'll be lucky if you find space at one of the small tables, but once you begin to order—platters of fried squid, pungent tuna, grilled shrimp, tiny brochettes of sole—you might not be able to stop. Most tapas cost 2€. A beer costs 1.50€, a hard drink at least 3.50€ to 4€. La Bodega is open daily from noon to 5pm and 7:30pm to midnight.

Ready to dance off all those tapas? **El Palladium,** Palma de Mallorca (✆ **95-238-42-89**), a well-designed nightclub in the town center, is one of the most convivial in Torremolinos. Strobes, spotlights, and a loud sound system set the scene. There's even a swimming pool. Expect to pay 3.50€ or more for a drink; cover is 15€, including one drink after 11pm. The club is open from 11pm to 6am in summer months only.

For unabashed tourist flamenco, try **Taberna Flamenca Pepe López,** Plaza de la Gamba Alegre (www.tabernaflamencapepelopez.com; ✆ **95-238-12-84**), in the center of Torremolinos. In an old house (at least old in the Torremolinos sense), this is a tavern-style joint with darkened-wood furnishings. Many of the artists come from the bars of Sevilla and Granada, and they perform Monday through Saturday at 10pm April to October. The frequency of shows is substantially reduced during the cooler months, and performances are confined mainly to the weekends—call to confirm first. A 27€ cover includes your first drink and the show.

Gay men and women from throughout northern Europe are almost always in residence in Torremolinos; if you want to meet some of them, consider having a drink or two at **Abadía,** La Nogalera 521 (no phone), open daily 6pm to dawn.

One of the Costa del Sol's major casinos, **Casino Torrequebrada,** Avenida del Sol, Benalmádena-Costa (www.casinotorrequebrada.net; ✆ **95-257-73-00**), is on the lobby level of the Hotel Torrequebrada. It has tables devoted to blackjack, chemin de fer, punto y banco, and two kinds of roulette. The casino is open daily from 8pm to 5am. The nightclub offers a flamenco show year-round at 10:30pm Tuesday to Saturday; in midsummer, there might be more glitz and more frequent shows (ask when you get there, or call). Nightclub acts begin at 10:30pm (Las Vegas revue) and 11:30pm (Spanish revue). The restaurant is open nightly from 9:30pm to midnight. Casino admission is 3€. Bring your passport to be admitted.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Gran Hotel Cervantes Located in a shopping center, the Cervantes is a 7-minute walk from the beach. It has a garden and is adjacent to a maze of patios and narrow streets of boutiques and open-air cafes. Rooms have modern furniture and spacious terraces; many have balconies with sea views. In midsummer, this hotel is likely to be booked with tour groups from northern Europe, many of whom can be seen sunning themselves on the hotel's rooftop terrace. A special feature in summer is the luncheon buffet and barbecue by the pool.

Calle las Mercedes s/n, 29620 Torremolinos. www.cervanteshoteltorremolinos.com. ✆ **95-238-40-33.** Fax 95-238-48-57. 398 units. 52€–160€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Tropicana & Beach Club ★ This popular hotel stands right on a beach at the beginning of La Carihuela coastal strip. Boasting its own beach club, Tropicana is desirable mainly because it's removed from the summer hubbub in the heart of Torremolinos. In honor of its namesake, a tropical motif dominates. Some decorators tried to give a little flair to the comfortably furnished and midsize bedrooms. Most of the rooms open onto private balconies with sea views. Many seafood restaurants are only a 5-minute stroll from the hotel's door.

Trópico 6, 29620 Torremolinos. www.hotel-tropicana.net. ✆ **95-238-66-00.** Fax 95-238-05-68. 84 units. 50€–210€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer.

Meliá Costa del Sol Centrally located, this hotel lies on the seafront along Playa de Bajondillo, a 10-minute walk from the shopping area of Torremolinos. The midsize rooms are modern and well maintained, and each has a well-kept bathroom. However, the hotel is popular with package-tour groups, so you may not feel a part of things if you come alone.

Paseo Marítimo 11, 29620 Torremolinos. www.meliacostadelsol.solmelia.com. ✆ **95-238-66-77.** Fax 95-238-64-17. 540 units. 69€–225€ double; 133€–299€ junior suite; 298€–530€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; concierge; health club; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Roc Lago Rojo ★ 🎁 In the heart of the fishing village of La Carihuela, Roc Lago Rojo is one of the nicer places to stay in Torrie. It's only 45m (148 ft.) from the beach and has its own gardens and sunbathing terraces. Built in the 1970s and renovated in 2006, it offers tastefully decorated studio-style rooms, all of which have terraces with views. In the late evening, there is disco dancing. Note that all rooms are furnished with either two or three twin-style beds.

Miami 5, 29620 Torremolinos. www.roc-hotels.com. ✆ **95-238-76-66.** Fax 95-238-08-91. 144 units. 50€–155€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (4€ per hr. in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel El Pozo 🏷 This hotel isn't for light sleepers—it's in one of the liveliest sections of town, a short walk from the train station. It's usually filled with budget travelers, including many students from northern Europe. The lobby level has professional French billiards, heavy Spanish furniture, and a view of a small courtyard. From your window or terrace you can view the promenades below. The small rooms are furnished in a simple, functional style—nothing special, but the price is right.

Casablanca 2, 29620 Torremolinos. www.hotelelpozo.com. ✆ **95-238-06-22.** Fax 95-238-71-17. 28 units. 49€–79€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 8€. **Amenities:** Bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Los Jazmínes Located on one of the best beaches in Torremolinos, Los Jazmínes faces a plaza at the foot of the shady Avenida del Lido. Sun-seekers will find it replete with terraces, lawns, and an irregularly shaped swimming pool. The small rooms (all doubles) seem a bit impersonal, but have little balconies and compact bathrooms. From here it's a good hike up the hill to the town center.

Av. de Lido 6, 29620 Torremolinos. www.hotellosjazmines.com. ✆ **95-238-50-33.** Fax 95-237-27-02. 100 units. 55€–95€ double; 90€–130€ apt. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Residencia Miami ★ 🎁 The Miami, near La Carihuela, might remind you of a 1930s Hollywood movie star's home. High walls and private gardens surround the property. Fuchsia and bougainvillea climb over the rear patio's arches, and a tile terrace is used for sunbathing and refreshments. The country-style living room contains a walk-in fireplace, and the compact rooms are furnished in a traditional, comfortable style. Each has a balcony. Breakfast is included, and a limited dinner menu is available if ordered in advance.

Calle Aladino 14, 29620 Torremolinos. www.residencia-miami.com. ✆ **95-238-52-55.** 26 units. 40€–64€ double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C.

MÁLAGA ★★

548km (341 miles) S of Madrid, 132km (82 miles) E of Algeciras

Although it's the so-called capital of the Costa del Sol, Málaga is a city that most visitors only pass through en route to the beach. But the city's gardens, centuries-old palaces, and Moorish ruins give it a nostalgic, even romantic air. And it's the birthplace of the great Pablo Picasso and home to many of his works. Wander the narrow labyrinth of the Old City, walking past taverns filled with old men who look as though they once posed for Goya paintings. Promenade along its seafront, with its palm trees, jacarandas, and ice-cream vendors.

Things to Do Picasso was born here in 1891; at the **Museo Picasso,** see where he began his journey from child prodigy to renowned master. Stand at the hilltop **Alcabaza** for harbor views, then hike to the Generalife to see the sultan's summer gardens. In the **Centro de Arte Contemporáneo,** thrill at the avant-garde works of some of Europe's most controversial artists.

Relaxation Málaga's beaches are better known for their *chiringuitos* (beachside bars) than for their sands, but they are definitely fun. Wander at leisure through 150-year-old botanical garden **La Concepción,** then, at sunset, head for the floodlit grounds of the **Gibralfaro,** whose Moorish fortifications date from the 14th century.

Restaurants & Dining At seafront restaurants, gourmets (and everyone else) can sample regional dishes such as succulent *boquerones* (fresh anchovies) and grilled cuttlefish. For some of the best fish, head for the cafes of **Plaza de la Marina,** overlooking the harbor. Andalucía's favorite dishes crowd the menu—stone-cooked steaks, grilled *setas* (oyster mushrooms), and even some culinary delights from North Africa.

Entertainment & Nightlife Here, it's the historic city itself that is the diversion. Begin with an evening stroll through the palm-lined **Paseo del Parque,** stopping at a cafe for a drink. Andalucían guitarists entertain in the centuries-old tapas bars, especially around **Plaza Unibay.** Watch the alcohol content of the regional wines based on the local Muscatel grape. The main nightlife district is at **Maestranza.**

Essentials

GETTING THERE Travelers from North America usually must transfer for Málaga in Madrid or Barcelona. From within Europe, some airlines (including British Airways from London) offer nonstop flights to Málaga. **Iberia** has frequent service. Flights can be booked through Iberia's reservations line (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642** in the U.S., or 90-240-05-00 in Spain).

Five to nine **trains** a day arrive in Málaga from Madrid (trip time: 2½ hr.). Three trains a day connect Sevilla and Málaga (trip time: 3 hr.). For ticket prices and rail information in Málaga, contact RENFE (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**).

Buses from all over Spain arrive at the terminal on the Paseo de los Tilos, behind the RENFE offices. Buses run to all the major Spanish cities, including eight buses per day from Madrid (trip time: 7 hr.), five per day from Córdoba (trip time: 3 hr.), and 10 per day from Sevilla (trip time: 3 hr.). Call ✆ **90-242-22-42** in Málaga for bus information.

From resorts in the west (such as Torremolinos and Marbella), you can drive east along the N-340/E-15 to Málaga. If you're in the east at the end of the Costa del Sol (Almería), take the N-340/E-15 west to Málaga, with a stopover at Nerja.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza de la Marina 11 (www.malagaturismo.com; ✆ **95-192-62-20**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 7pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS The most festive time in Málaga is the first week in August, when the city celebrates its Reconquest by Fernando and Isabel in 1487. The big ***feria* (fair)** is an occasion for parades and bullfights. A major tree-shaded boulevard, the Paseo del Parque, is transformed into a fairground featuring amusements and restaurants.

Exploring Málaga

Unlike the rest of the Costa del Sol, Málaga has several historical sites of interest to the average visitor.

Alcazaba ★ ☺ PALACE The remains of this ancient Moorish palace are within easy walking distance of the city center, off the Paseo del Parque. Plenty of signs point the way up the hill. The fortress was erected in the 9th or 10th century, although there have been later additions and reconstructions. Fernando and Isabel stayed here when they reconquered the city. With orange trees and purple bougainvillea making the grounds even more beautiful, the view overlooking the city and the bay is among the most panoramic on the Costa del Sol.

Plaza de la Aduana, Alcazabilla. ✆ **95-212-20-20.** Admission 5€. Tues–Sun 8:30am–8pm. Bus: 4, 18, 19, 24, or 135.

Castillo de Gibralfaro CASTLE On a hill overlooking Málaga and the Mediterranean are the ruins of an ancient Moorish castle-fortress. The walls are crumbling and the keep is little more than a jungle of ragweed, but the views are spectacular. It is adjacent to the government-run *parador* and might easily be tied in with a luncheon visit.

Warning: Do not walk to Gibralfaro Castle from town. Readers have reported muggings along the way, and the area around the castle is dangerous. Take the bus from the cathedral (see below).

Cerro de Gibralfaro. Admission 2€ (free Sun). Daylight hours. Microbus: 35, leaving hourly from cathedral.

Centro de Arte Contemporáneo (CAC) de Málaga ★ ART MUSEUM This contemporary arts center lies in a renovated old wholesalers' market and stages the best array of temporary art exhibitions in town, many showcasing the works of international artists such as Alex Katz and Louise Bourgeois. It always has a permanent exhibition. The museum also focuses some of its exhibitions on

An interior courtyard of Málaga's Alcazaba palace.

The outer walls of the Alcazaba.

up-and-coming Spanish artists, and it displays photographic studies in its vast exhibition space. Skip it if you have time only for Museo Picasso Málaga, but try to see it if you can, as Málaga rivals Sevilla as the major cultural center of modern art in southern Spain.

Alemania s/n. www.cacmalaga.org. ✆ **95-212-00-55.** Free admission. Mid-June to mid-Sept Tues–Sun 10am–2pm and 5–9pm; off season Tues–Sun 10am–2pm and 5–8pm.

Fundación Picasso MUSEUM A well-told tale concerns the birth of Picasso: In October 1891, when the artist was born, he was unable to draw breath until his uncle blew cigar smoke into his lungs. Whether this rather harsh entry into the world had any effect on his work is mere speculation. What cannot be denied is the effect he was to have on the world. He was born in a five-story building in the heart of Málaga's historic quarter; this is where he spent the first 17 months of his life. Today, the house is both headquarters of the Picasso Foundation and a library for art historians. The Picasso family lived on the second floor, called Casa Natal. The original furnishings are long gone, but you will see a permanent exhibit of Picasso ceramics, sculpture, and engravings, along with a few family artifacts. The museum mounts temporary exhibitions featuring avant-garde works from Picasso's time.

Plaza de la Merced 15. www.fundacionpicasso.es. ✆ **95-206-02-15.** Admission 1€. Mon–Sat 10am–8pm; Sun 10am–2pm.

Málaga Cathedral CATHEDRAL This 16th-century Renaissance cathedral in Málaga's center, built on the site of a great mosque, suffered damage during the Spanish Civil War, but its missing bell tower was simply never built. (Work halted in 1782, earning the building the nickname La Manquite, or "the One-Armed Lady.") It nonetheless remains vast and impressive, reflecting a basically Gothic architecture with baroque decoration. Its most notable attributes are the richly ornamented choir stalls, which include 40 master wood carvings by Pedro de Mena (1628–88).

Plaza Obispo. ✆ **95-221-59-17.** Admission 3.50€. Mon–Fri 10am–6pm; Sat 10am–5pm. Closed holidays. Bus: 14, 18, 19, or 24.

Museo Picasso Málaga ★★★ ART MUSEUM In the Old Quarter a short walk from Picasso's birthplace, this museum displays some of his important works. The museum, which opened in 2003, combines a restored 16th-century

Mudéjar palace, Palacio de Buenvista, with a series of Modernist buildings that evoke the Pueblos Blancos in the hills above Málaga. The Spanish dictator Franco detested Picasso, his politics, and his "degenerate art," and refused the artist's offer to send paintings from France to Málaga in the 1950s. (The feeling, by the way, was mutual.) Ultimately, the collection here was made possible by two of Picasso's heirs: his son Paulo's wife, Christine Ruiz-Picasso; and Bernard, Christine and Paulo's son. Many of the artworks are virtual family heirlooms, including paintings depicting one of the artist's wives, such as *Olga Kokhlova with Mantilla,* or one of his lovers, *Jacqueline Seated.* Basically, this is the art Picasso gave to his family or else the art he wanted to keep for himself—in all, more than 200 paintings, drawings, sculptures, ceramics, and graphics. Some other notable works on display—many of them never on public view before—include *Bust of a Woman with Arms Crossed Behind Her Head, Woman in an Armchair,* and *The Eyes of the Artist.* There is also a memorable painting of Picasso's son, done in 1923.

San Agustín 8. www.museopicassomalaga.org. ✆ **95-212-76-00.** Combined permanent collection and exhibitions 8€; half-price for seniors, students, and children 11–16; free for children 10 and under. Tues–Thurs 10am–8pm; Fri–Sat 10am–9pm; Sun 10am–8pm.

Where to Eat In & Around Málaga

EXPENSIVE

Escuela de Hostelería ★ 🎁 MEDITERRANEAN This imaginative little restaurant is part of a hotel and catering school housed in a villa from the 1800s located 8km (5 miles) outside Málaga and 3km (1¾ miles) from the airport. In business since the early 1990s, this place is mainly patronized by discerning locals with a taste for good food. The menu changes monthly. Freshly caught *merluza* is perfectly prepared with zesty mussels and mushrooms in a parsley-laced sauce. In autumn, loin of deer might appear on the menu with a chestnut purée. Other tempting dishes include sautéed filet of beef with a broccoli purée, green asparagus, and truffle juice; and a lightly smoked sea bass cooked with a white wine–and-ginger sauce. The villa is old, but the dining room adjoining it is modern, opening onto a garden.

Finca La Cónsula, Churriana. www.laconsula.com. ✆ **95-243-60-26.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–28€; fixed-price menu 39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1–4pm. Closed Aug.

José Carlos García Restaurante ★★ SPANISH Long known as the Café de Paris, Málaga's best restaurant moved in 2011 to the city's newest shopping center, Muelle Uno, in the port area. Chef José Carlos García interned with both the Basque master Martin Berasategui and the Catalán genius Joan Roca, and he brings their sense of playful invention to the flavors of the Andalucían coast. In the winter season, the chef might fill *crêpes gratins* with precious baby eels. He takes the classic salt cod salad and reinvents it as a cream of cod, citrus fruits, and black olives, for example, or turns simple fried crayfish into a nest of fried noodles around the prawn ceremonially placed at the shoreline of sea lettuce foam. Look for his raspberry cannelloni dressed with a little vinegar and stuffed with drained yogurt and fresh berries. In addition to the a la carte menu, García offers a tasting menu and a market menu composed exclusively of that day's finds.

Muelle Uno. www.rcafedeparis.com. ✆ **95-222-50-43.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–28€; fixed-price menus 43€–130€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed July 1–15. Bus: 251.

MODERATE

Adolfo ★ ANDALUCÍAN This restaurant has been one of the best and most reliable in Málaga ever since opening to instant success in 1993 along the ocean-bordering Paseo Marítimo. The decor is regional, with hardwood floors and exposed brick walls. Backed up by an excellent wine list strong on Andalucían vintages, the restaurant has a friendly, helpful staff. Well worth ordering are such daily specials as hake in a green sauce and duck glazed with a sweet wine. The big favorite here, often ordered on festive occasions, is *cochinillo* (roast suckling pig) flavored with garden herbs. Two other delicious choices are stewed monkfish with prawns and wild mushrooms and roast baby kid in a rosemary-infused honey sauce.

Paseo Marítimo Pablo Ruiz Picasso 12. ✆ **95-260-19-14.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–26€; fixed-price menu 45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed June.

El Chinitas SPANISH This well-established restaurant sits in the heart of Málaga a short walk from the tourist office. Many regular patrons consume a round of tapas and drinks at the associated Bar Orellana next door (which maintains the same hours, minus the midafternoon closing), and then head to Chinitas for a meal. The place is often filled with locals—always a good sign. The menu changes but might include a mixed fish fry, grilled red mullet, shrimp cocktail, grilled sirloin, or shellfish soup. Service is both swift and attentive.

Moreno Monroy 4. www.elchinitas.com. ✆ **95-221-09-72.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–21€. DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro SPANISH This government-owned restaurant on the mountain above the city is especially notable for its view. You can look down into the heart of the Málaga bullring, among other sights. Meals are served in the attractive dining room or under the arches of two wide terraces with views of the coast. Featured dishes include *hors d'oeuvres parador*—your entire table covered with tiny dishes full of tasty tidbits. Two other specialties are an omelet of *chanquetes*, tiny whitefish popular in this part of the country, and chicken Villaroi. Otherwise, the quality of the food varies greatly.

Castillo de Gibralfaro. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-222-19-02.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 16€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Microbus: 35.

INEXPENSIVE

Refectorium 🎁 SPANISH Located behind the Málaga bullring, this place becomes hectic during any bullfight, filling up with fans and often, after the fight, with matadors and their crews. The cuisine has an old-fashioned flair, and the servings are generous. Try a typical Málaga soup from Moorish times, *ajo blanco con uvas* (cold almond soup flavored with garlic and garnished with big Muscatel grapes). Another classic opener is garlicky mushrooms with bits of ham. The fresh seafood is a delight, including monkfish and hake; lamb might be served with a saffron-flavored tomato sauce. Desserts are homey Andalucían sweets, including rice pudding.

Calle Cervantes 8. ✆ **95-221-89-90.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat and during bullfights. Main courses 13€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–5pm and 8pm–midnight.

Shopping

The region around Málaga produces artfully rustic pottery, which makes a nice gift or souvenir. A handful of appealing outlets are scattered throughout the city's

Málaga's main street, Calle Larios.

historic core. Another offering, **Ceramica Las Vistillas,** Carretera Mijas Km 2 (www.ceramicalasvistillas.com; ✆ **95-245-13-63**), is about 2km (1¼ miles) from Málaga's center.

Entertainment & Nightlife

The fun of nightlife in Málaga is just wandering, although there are a few standout destinations. More than just about any other city in the region, Málaga offers night owls the chance to stroll a labyrinth of inner city streets, drinking wine at any convenient *tasca* and talking with friends and new acquaintances.

Start out along the town's main thoroughfare, **Calle Larios,** adjacent to the city's port. Off Calle Larios, you can gravitate to any of the *tascas,* discos, and pubs lining the edges of the **Calle Granada.**

If you want to eat well and cheaply, do as the locals do and head for the taverns below. Don't expect a refined experience, but the food is some of the most enjoyable and least expensive in Málaga. You can easily fill up on two or three orders of tapas because portions are extremely generous.

Nearby, an all-pedestrian street, **Calle Compagnía,** and a square, the **Plaza Uncibaj,** are home to simpler *tascas.* Completely unpretentious (and in some cases without any discernible name), they serve glasses of wine and tapas similar to those available from their neighbors.

A rock venue, **ZZ Pub,** Tejón y Rodríguez 6 (www.zzpub.es; ✆ **95-244-15-95**), is a favorite hangout for university students drawn here to see local bands play. Sometimes the Málaga newspaper, *El Sur,* publishes details. DJs rule the night at other times.

The main theater in the province is **Teatro Cervantes de Málaga,** Ramos Marin s/n (www.teatrocervantes.es; ✆ **95-222-41-00**), which opened its doors in the second half of the 19th century. Reopened in 1987 by Queen Sofía after a long closure, this is an elegant yet austere building. Its programs include plays in Spanish, as well as a number of concerts and flamenco entertainment of interest to all. The major performances of the Málaga Symphony Orchestra are staged here in winter. The theater is open from mid-September to the end of June; its box office is open Monday to Friday 11am to 2pm and 6 to 9pm, and Saturday 5:30 to 8:30pm.

Where to Stay

For such a large city (and major business center) in a resort area, Málaga is not heavily endowed with hotels, as so many visitors stay in the Costa del Sol beach towns. Book well in advance, especially if you want to stay in the *parador.*

EXPENSIVE

AC Málaga Palacio ★ The leading hotel in the town center, the Palacio opens onto a tree-lined esplanade near the cathedral and the harbor. Most balconies offer views of the port, and below you can see horses pulling century-old carriages. The midsize rooms are traditionally furnished and have firm beds and good bathrooms. The street-floor lounges mix antiques with more modern furnishings. There is an excellent breakfast buffet, but North Americans tend to be disappointed with the weak, lukewarm brewed coffee. Ask for an espresso—or an Americano, if you like it weaker.

Cortina del Muelle 1, 29015 Málaga. www.ac-hotels.com. ☎ **95-221-51-85.** Fax 95-222-51-00. 214 units. 90€–140€ double; 125€–350€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€ nearby. Bus: 4, 18, 19, or 24. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (6.50€ per hr.).

Parador de Málaga Gibralfaro ★★ Restored in 1994, this is one of Spain's oldest, most tradition-heavy *paradores.* It enjoys a scenic location high on a plateau near an old fortified castle. Overlooking the city and the Mediterranean, it has views of the bullring, mountains, and beaches. Rooms have private entrances, living room areas, and wide glass doors opening onto private sun terraces. The **restaurant** (p. 386), notable for its views, serves Spanish cuisine.

Castillo de Gibralfaro s/n, 29016 Málaga. www.parador.es. ☎ **95-222-19-02.** Fax 95-222-19-04. 38 units. 155€–185€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Take the coastal road, Paseo de Reding, which becomes Av. de Pries, and then Paseo de Sancha. Turn left onto Camino Nuevo and follow the small signs. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Málaga Golf ★ A tasteful resort hotel created by the Spanish government, this hacienda-style *parador* is flanked by a golf course on one side and the Mediterranean on another. It's less than 3km (1¾ miles) from the airport, 11km (6¾ miles) from Málaga, and 4km (2½ miles) from Torremolinos. Rooms have private balconies with water views. The furnishings are attractive, the beds excellent. The restaurant has an indoor/outdoor dining room and a refined country-club atmosphere.

Carretera de Málaga, Torremolinos, 29080 Apartado 324, Málaga. www.parador.es. ☎ **95-238-12-55.** Fax 95-238-89-63. 60 units. 100€–177€ double; 180€–326€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; 18-hole golf course; outdoor pool; room service; spa; outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MODERATE

NH Málaga In the commercial and historic center, this hotel is not near a beach but is convenient for sightseeing and shopping. Next to the Puente (bridge) de la Esperanza, it is a functional and well-managed choice with soundproof windows tamping down on the traffic noise. Its bedrooms, furnished with wooden floors and mainly dark furnishings, are a bit small. Room prices vary widely: Only four are in the expensive category, and they are virtually junior suites, the best in the house. Otherwise, rooms here are quite affordable. For such a standard chain format, there are extras such as choice of pillows (firm, soft, duvet) and deluxe toiletries.

Av. Río Guadalmedina s/n, 29007 Málaga. www.nh-hoteles.com. ✆ **95-207-13-23.** Fax 95-239-38-62. 133 units. 65€–130€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Internet (5.90€ per day), minibar.

Room Mate Larios This hotel ranks just behind the *parador* as the most desirable place to stay in town. It's on the main street of the Old Town, a 5-minute walk from the Picasso Museum. The interior is contemporary and stylish, with a terrace opening onto a panoramic view of the city. The midsize rooms are decorated in a minimalist but stylish way. All have tasteful furnishings, and the suites come with whirlpool tubs. Because of the hotel's popularity, be sure to book well in advance.

Calle Marqués de Larios 2, 29005 Málaga. www.room-matehotels.com. ✆ **95-222-22-00.** Fax 95-222-24-07. 41 units. 76€–90€ double; 113€–125€ junior suite; 142€–155€ triple including continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

TRYP Guadalmar ★ ☺ Drenched in sunlight, this nine-story modern hotel sits across from a private beach that's 3km (1¾ miles) west of the center of Málaga. The hotel benefited from a radical renovation in 1996 and a takeover by the well-respected TRYP chain. Guest rooms are spacious, airy, and simply furnished; each room has a private seaview balcony. Families check in here to use the beach in front, one of the safest in the area. The staff plans activities for children from June to September, including swimming lessons. An air of anonymity prevails as the staff struggles with the comings and goings of large numbers of vacationers.

Calle Mobydick 2, Urbanización Guadalmar, 29004 Málaga. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **95-223-17-03.** Fax 95-224-03-85. 196 units. 75€–126€ double; 115€–220€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; children's programs; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (6€ per 12 hr.).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Carlos V This hotel is in a central location near the cathedral, with an interesting facade decorated with wrought-iron balconies and *miradores* (viewing stations). It's a reliable, conservative choice. The small rooms are furnished in a no-frills style, but they are well maintained and equipped with adequate bathrooms.

Cister 10, 29015 Málaga. www.hotel-carlosvmalaga.com. ✆ **95-221-51-20.** Fax 95-221-51-29. 50 units. 54€–62€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. Bus: 3 from the rail station. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Don Curro Right in the center of Málaga, just around the corner from the cathedral, this is a conventional beach hotel 100m (328 ft.) from Malagueta Beach. Traditional in style, it is half a century old. Most rooms are midsize, with a mix of classical and modern decor and lots of wooden furniture. The most desirable rooms are those in the more modern wing, at the rear of the building. The hotel is family run and extends a welcoming atmosphere. In the wood-paneled public rooms you'll find a cozy fireplace lounge.

Sancha de Lara 7, 29015 Málaga. www.hoteldoncurro.com. ✆ **95-222-72-00.** Fax 95-221-59-46. 118 units. 48€–105€ double; 68€–128€ suite. Children 11 and under stay free in parent's room.

AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer (in some), minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Los Naranjos 🏷 The well-maintained Hotel los Naranjos is one of the more reasonably priced choices in the city. It's 1.6km (1 mile) from the heart of town on the eastern side of Málaga, past the Plaza de Toros (bullring), and near the best beach in Málaga, the Baños del Carmen. The hotel offers midsize, contemporary rooms. Breakfast (which costs extra) is the only meal served.

Paseo de Sancha 35, 29016 Málaga. www.hotel-losnaranjos.com. ☎ **95-222-43-16.** Fax 95-222-59-75. 41 units. 60€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. Bus: 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Room Mate Lola 🏷 This stylish Room Mate hotel is a great value and lies in a transitional neighborhood only a 10-minute walk from Málaga's famous Picasso Museum. Its sleek black-and-white interiors, all geometric patterns and etched glass, are in a chic Art Deco style, though certain antique pieces have been added to give the little boutique hotel more character. The designer wasn't afraid to use color—we're talking lavender and acid green. Bedrooms are midsize and tastefully and comfortably furnished, set around a tranquil courtyard with a gushing fountain. This is where you can take your breakfast or chill out. The hotel has a small rooftop pool with a sun terrace where you can see the mountains in the distance.

Casa de Campos, 29001 Málaga. www.room-matehotels.com. ☎ **95-277-93-00.** Fax 95-222-82-65. 50 units. 64€–99€ double, 135€–145€ junior suite, including large breakfast until noon. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Where to Stay Outside Málaga

Barceló La Bobadilla ★★★ ☺ An hour's drive northeast of Málaga, La Bobadilla is one of the most luxurious retreats in southern Spain. It is a secluded oasis in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada near the town of Loja, which is 71km (44 miles) north of Málaga. La Bobadilla is a 21km (13-mile) drive from Loja. The hotel complex is built like an Andalucían village, a cluster of whitewashed *casas* constructed around a tower and a white church. Every *casa* has a roof terrace and a balcony overlooking the olive grove–studded district. Each unit is sumptuous and individually designed, from the least expensive double to the most expensive King's Suite. The hotel village stands on a hillside, on 404 hectares (998 acres) of private, unspoiled grounds.

Finca La Bobadilla, Apartado 144E, 18300 Loja (Granada). www.barcelolabobadilla.com. ☎ **95-832-18-61.** Fax 95-832-18-10. 70 units. 144€–450€ double; 172€–1,100€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. From the Málaga airport, follow signs toward Granada, but at Km 175 continue through the village of Salinas. Take road marked Salinas/Rute; after 3km (1¾ miles), follow signposts for hotel to the entrance. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; bikes; children's center; concierge; exercise room; 2 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; 2 outdoor unlit tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Side Trips from Málaga

EL TORCAL DE ANTEQUERA ★ ☺

Just over 50km (31 miles) north of Málaga, El Torcal is reached by driving A-45 north to Antequera, A-343 south from Antequera, then local road MA-3310 to El Torcal (watch for brown signs). The drive takes just under an hour to reach the desert hills that were designated in 1929 as Andalucía's first natural park. An excellent paved road swishes back and forth through the bone-dry landscape, providing constantly changing perspectives on the wind-sculpted limestone hoodoos. Three well-marked trails depart from the visitor center (✆ **95-203-13-89;** daily 10am–5pm; free admission) and if you stick to the trails, you run a good chance of spotting several of the 30 species of wild orchids that flourish in this harsh landscape or seeing an eagle swoop down on an unsuspecting lizard. If you do not stick to the trails, you run an excellent chance of becoming utterly lost in minutes—to the delight of the griffin vultures riding the thermals overhead. The landscape is so spooky that El Torcal has the dubious distinction of having more UFO sightings than any other place in Spain.

NERJA ★

52km (32 miles) E of Málaga, 96km (60 miles) S of Granada, 548km (341 miles) S of Madrid

Nerja is known for its good if pebbly beaches and small coves, its seclusion, its narrow streets and courtyards, and its whitewashed, flat-roofed houses. Nearby is one of Andalucía's top geological attractions, the **La Cueva de Nerja** (see below).

At the mouth of the Chillar River, Nerja gets its name from the Arabic word *narixa,* meaning "bountiful spring." Its most dramatic spot is the **Balcón de Europa ★★**, a palm-shaded promenade that juts into the Mediterranean. The walkway was built in 1885 in honor of a visit from the Spanish king Alfonso XIII in the wake of an earthquake that had shattered part of nearby Málaga. The phrase "Balcón de Europa" (Balcony of Europe) is said to have been coined by the king during one of the speeches he made in Nerja praising the beauty of the panorama around him. To reach the best beaches, head west from the Balcón and follow the shoreline.

The Balcón de Europa.

Essentials

GETTING THERE At least 19 **buses** per day make the 1-hour trip from Málaga to Nerja, costing 4€ one-way. Service is provided by Alsina Graells. If you're driving, head along the N-340/E-15 east from Málaga, or take the N-340/E-15 west from the Motril junction with A-14 coming south from Granada.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Carmen 1 (www.nerja.org; ✆ **95-252-15-31**), is open daily 10am to 2pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS A **cultural festival** takes place here in July. In the past, it has drawn leading artists, musicians, and dancers from around the world.

The Cueva de Nerja.

Exploring La Cueva de Nerja

The most popular outing from Málaga and Nerja is to the **Cueva de Nerja (Cave of Nerja)** ★★, Carretera de Maro s/n (www.cuevadenerja.es; ✆ **95-252-95-20**). Scientists believe this prehistoric stalactite and stalagmite cave was inhabited from 25,000 to 2000 B.C. It was rediscovered in 1959, when a small group of boys found it by chance. Once fully opened, it revealed a wealth of treasures left from the days of the cave dwellers, including Paleolithic paintings. They depict horses, deer, and other prey, but only a small fraction of the paintings lie in the galleries open to the public. But the striking geology compensates: You can walk through stupendous galleries where ceilings soar to a height of 60m (197 ft.).

The cave is in the hills near Nerja. From here you get panoramic views of the countryside and sea. It's open daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6:30pm (until 7:30pm July–Aug). Admission is 8.50€ adults, 4.50€ children 6 to 12, and free for children 5 and under. Buses to the cave leave from Muelle de Heredia in Málaga hourly from 7am to 8:15pm. Return buses run every 2 hours until 8:15pm. The journey takes about 1 hour.

Where to Eat

Casa Luque ANDALUCÍAN With its impressive canopied and balconied facade near the heart of town, Casa Luque resembles a dignified private villa. The interior has an Andalucían courtyard, and in summer there's a seaview terrace. Dishes are tasty, portions are generous, and the kitchen excels at a number of the Moorish-influenced dishes indigenous to this citrus coast: salt cod salad with mandarin oranges, roast duck breast glazed with honey and served with a bitter-lemon sauce, or chicken couscous with preserved lemon.

Plaza Cavana 2. www.casaluque.com. ✆ **95-252-10-04.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–22€. DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 12:30–3pm and 7:30–11pm.

Pepe Rico Restaurant ★ INTERNATIONAL Opened in 1966, Pepe Rico is one of Nerja's finest restaurants. Dine in a tavern room or al fresco on the patio.

The specialty of the day, which might be a Spanish, German, Swedish, or French dish, could range from almond-and-garlic soup to duck braised in red wine. The impressive list of hors d'oeuvres includes smoked swordfish, salmon mousse, and prawns *pil-pil* (with Basque hot peppers). Main dishes include filet of sole, roast leg of lamb, prawns Café de Paris, and steak dishes.

Almirante Ferrándiz 28. www.peperico.info. ✆ **95-252-02-47.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–26€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 12:30–3pm and 7–11pm. Closed 2 weeks in Dec and 1 week in Jan.

Restaurante Rey Alfonso ★ SPANISH/FRENCH Few visitors to the Balcón de Europa realize they're standing directly above one of the most unusual restaurants in town. The menu and decor don't hold many surprises, but the close-up view of the crashing waves makes dining here worthwhile. Have a drink at the bar if you don't want a full meal. Specialties include a good vegetarian paella, Cuban-style rice, five preparations of sole (from grilled to meunière), several versions of tournedos and entrecôte, crayfish in whiskey sauce, and, for dessert, crêpes Suzette. You enter from the bottom of a flight of stairs that skirts the rocky base of a late-19th-century *mirador* that juts seaward as an extension of the town's main square.

Paseo Balcón de Europa s/n. ✆ **95-252-09-58.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–18€. MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 7–11pm; Sun noon–3pm. Closed 4 weeks Jan–Feb.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

Parador de Nerja ★ Many *paradores* are historic structures, but this government-owned hotel is of simple modern construction. It sits on the outskirts of town, a 5-minute walk from the center. On the edge of a cliff, next to the sea, the hotel centers on a flower-filled courtyard with splashing fountain. The spacious rooms are furnished in understated but tasteful style, with midsize bathrooms.

Calle Almuñécar 8, 29780 Nerja. www.parador.es. ✆ **95-252-00-50.** Fax 95-252-19-97. 98 units. 110€–185€ double; 306€–370€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MODERATE

Carabeo ★ 🎁 There is no more tranquil oasis in Nerja than this affordable little inn. A boutique hotel of charm and sophistication, Carabeo lies in the old sector of town in a typical Andalucían house, but it's also within an easy walk of the center and a 5-minute walk to a good beach. Taste and care have gone into the comfortable furnishings, and the place is filled with antiques and original art. The bedrooms are generally spacious, each with a small bathroom. Units are individually furnished, with well-chosen fabrics—in all, the British owners have created a rather homey feel. The nicest rooms open onto views of the sea. These seaview bedrooms also contain a terrace large enough to shelter sun beds and a small table for breakfast. The three small apartments rent by the week.

Hernando de Carabeo 34, 29780 Nerja. www.hotelcarabeo.com. ✆ **95-252-54-44.** Fax 95-252-17-34. 10 units. 80€–145€ double; from 275€ per week apt. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Children 11 and under not accepted. Free parking nearby. Closed late Oct–Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Balcón de Europa Occupying the best position in town, at the edge of the Balcón de Europa, this 1970s hotel offers guest rooms with private balconies overlooking the water and the rocks. At a private beach nearby, parasol-shielded tables are a peaceful place to enjoy the vista. The comfortable, midsize rooms have modern furniture and firm beds. There's a private garage a few steps away.

Paseo Balcón de Europa 1, 29780 Nerja. www.hotelbalconeuropa.com. ✆ **95-252-08-00.** Fax 95-252-44-90. 110 units. 108€–184€ double; 170€–258€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater heated pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Paraíso del Mar ★ 🎁 Next door to the more upmarket Parador de Nerja, this little hacienda also offers a panoramic view of the coastline. The former home of a wealthy expatriate has been turned into this comfortable villa near the edge of a cliff opening onto the fabled Balcón de Europa. Bedrooms are tastefully furnished but not luxurious. Most people request a seaview room; the rooms in the rear that lack views make up for it by being larger or including a Jacuzzi. You can also absorb the sea view from one of the hotel's public terraces.

Prolongación del Carabeo 22, 29780 Nerja. www.hotelparaisodelmar.es. ✆ **95-252-16-21.** Fax 95-252-23-09. 16 units. 96€–157€ double; 136€–183€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Bar; airport transfers (70€); bikes; Jacuzzi; outdoor freshwater pool; sauna; watersports equipment/rentals; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Ana 🏷 This simple inn calls itself a *hostal,* but it's more like a B&B, and one of the best bargains in a town where prices continue to rise dramatically. One of the town's more modern structures, it is still built in the old style and looks older than it is. Lying only 100m (328 ft.) from the landmark Balcón de Europa, it is run by a friendly couple who welcome you into their home. Bedrooms are simply furnished yet comfortable, the most desirable unit having a big bathroom with Jacuzzi.

Calle La Cruz, 29780 Nerja. http://hostalana.com. ✆ **95-252-30-43.** 17 units. 50€–60€ double. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, no phone.

Hostal Miguel The family-run Miguel is a pleasant, unpretentious inn on a quiet back street about a 3-minute walk from the Balcón de Europa, across from the well-known Pepe Rico Restaurant (p. 392). The simply furnished, somewhat small rooms have been renovated to add more Andalucían flavor. Breakfast is the only meal served, usually on a lovely roof terrace with a view of the mountains and sea. From July 15 to September 15, a minimum stay of 2 nights is required.

Almirante Ferrándiz 31, 29780 Nerja. www.hostalmiguel.com. ✆ **95-252-15-23.** 9 units. 45€–56€ double. MC, V. *In room:* Ceiling fan, fridge, no phone.

Hotel Plaza Cavana ★ 🎁 In the center of town, just behind the Balcón de Europa and a short walk from the beach, this two-story hotel is imbued with old-fashioned Andalucían charm. It lies behind a typical white facade with wooden balconies. The lobby has a classic decor with marble floors, and there is a garden patio where guests can relax. Rooms are elegant, spacious, and comfortable, and open onto balconies with either sea or mountain views.

Plaza Cavana 10, 29780 Nerja. www.hotelplazacavana.com. ✆ **95-252-40-00.** Fax 95-252-40-08. 39 units. 39€–109€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

ALMUÑÉCAR ★

75km (47 miles) E of Málaga, 78km (49 miles) S of Granada, 502km (314 miles) S of Madrid

The Phoenicians founded this seaside town in the 8th century B.C., naming it Sexi, and establishing the first *garum* (fermented fish paste) works just up from the main beach. The Romans took over in 218 B.C. and kept the *garum* business going, as Sexi's fish paste was traded as far away as Greece and Turkey. The town became a more traditional fishing port under the Moors, who also introduced sugar cane farming to the region. Today, most visitors come for the long stony beach dotted with *churrerías,* but an extensive complex of parks and ruins in **Barrio San Miguel** near the beach explains Almuñécar's rich history. The most important coastal resort of Granada province, Almuñécar is less crowded than the other beach resorts and has some of the best casual dining anywhere along the coast, thanks to the subtropical climate that makes its Rio Verde valley a hothouse for fruits and vegetables. The **Parque Botánico El Majuelo** in the central city next to the ruins of the Roman fish paste factory is filled with tropical and subtropical species that flourish in the warm microclimate.

Essentials

Palms on Almuñécar's beach.

GETTING THERE At least seven **buses** each per day make the 1-hour trip from Málaga to Almuñécar or Granada to Almuñécar, costing 4€ one-way. Service is provided by Alsina Graells (✆ **95-863-01-40** or 95-888-07-04). If you're driving, head along the N-340/E-15 east from Málaga, or take the A-14 south from Granada. Driving time is about 1 hour from both cities.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** at Av. de Europa s/n (www.almunecar.info; ✆ **95-863-11-325**) is open November to March daily 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7pm; April to June and September 16 to October daily 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm; and July to September 15 daily 10am to 2pm and 6 to 9pm. Called the **Palacete de la Najarra** and situated among parkland, the neo-Mudéjar structure is quite possibly Spain's most beautiful tourist office.

Exploring Almuñécar

Castillo San Miguel ☺ CASTLE Archaeologists have found ceramics on the site that date the fortifications back to a Carthaginian compound in the 3rd century B.C., and there is ample evidence that the Romans also fortified the spot. (That *garum* trade was worth protecting, apparently.) The castle that survives, though, was built in the 13th century by the Nasrid dynasty that also constructed the Alhambra. The structure was famous for its prison and the dungeon where political prisoners were kept. The Spanish monarchs modified the structure but kept its prison operative until 1808, when the castle was severely damaged by English bombardment.

Barrio San Miguel. www.almunecar.info. ✆ **95-863-11-25.** 2.35€ adults, 1.60€ seniors and children. Tues–Sat 10:30am–1:30pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun 10:30am–2pm.

Museo Arqueológico MUSEUM Hidden away in the vaulted basements of Roman ruins (La Cueva de los Siete Palacios), this museum of local history displays Roman and Moorish artifacts as well as Phoenician materials recovered from a necropolis on the northwest side of town. The most remarkable (and mysterious) piece in the museum is an Egyptian glass sculpted from solid quartz and inscribed with hieroglyphics that date from the 17th century B.C.—presumably an antiquity that was traded to Almuñécar sometime over the millennia.

Calle San Joaquín s/n. www.almunecar.info. ✆ **65-158-80-30.** 2.35€ adults, 1.60€ seniors and children. Tues–Sat 10:30am–1:30pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun 10:30am–2pm.

Parque Ornitológico Loro-Sexi ☺ ZOO More than 1,500 birds representing about 200 species fly in large caged areas inside this modern aviary. Scarlet macaws, toucans, and peacocks provide colorful splendor.

Barrio de San Miguel. www.almunecar.info. ✆ **95-863-11-25.** 4€ adults, 2€ seniors and children. Daily 11am–2pm and 4–6pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Digame Pepe ★ 🏷 SEAFOOD While Almuñécar is known for its colorful *churro* stands on the beach, it's a little short on simple sit-down dining. Digame Pepe is one step up from a *chiringuito* (beach bar), but it's the spot in town where the savvy locals head for great deals on the some of the best plates of fried and grilled fish on the Costa Tropical. You can get everything from sardines grilled on a wooden plank to lightly battered "fried foam" (the mixed small catch, eaten whole) to sea bream baked in salt. This is the place where the fishermen come first thing in the morning—both to sell their catch from the overnight set of the nets and to eat breakfast.

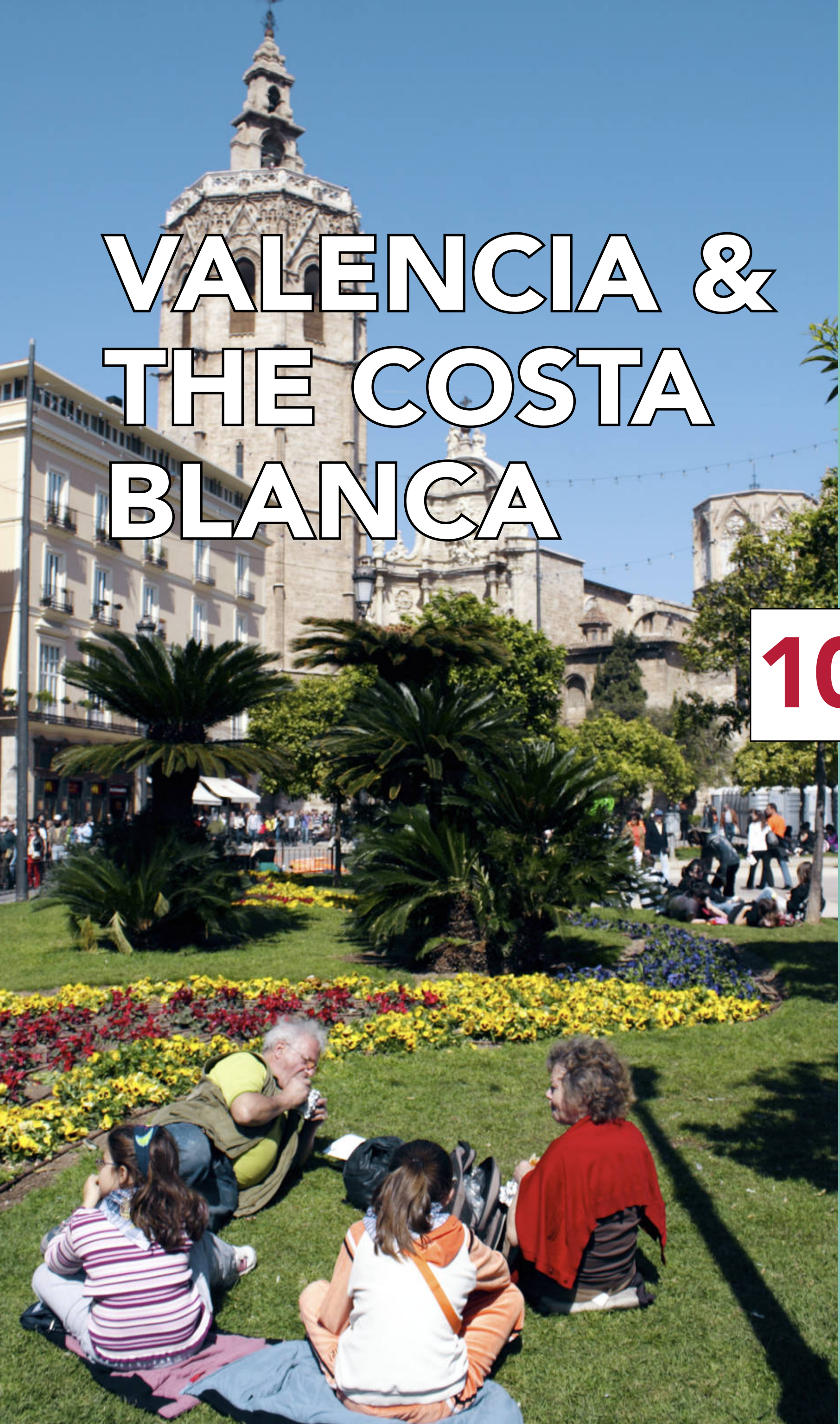
Paseo de los Flores s/n. ✆ **95-834-93-15.** Main dishes 8€–20€. MC, V. Daily 8am–10pm.

Hotel Helios White as a giant dove, this nine-story hotel on the west end of Almuñécar's main beach was the city's pioneer resort hotel when it was built in 1989. It has the old-fashioned grandeur of a moored ocean liner, with a dizzying view down the central atrium from the interior balconies on each floor. The hotel heats its large exterior pool from November through March, and, although the beach is literally across the street, swimming is often better at the pool. Rooms are very spacious, and the stepped design means that many of them have balconies overlooking the ocean. Smart, helpful, and courteous staff are a big asset.

Paseo San Cristóbal 12, 18690 Almuñécar. www.heliosalmunecar.com. ✆ **95-863-44-59.** Fax 95-863-44-69. 230 units. 70€–130€ double (includes breakfast). AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

VALENCIA & THE COSTA BLANCA

10



Spain's third-largest city, Valencia, is a fascinating, lyrical metropolis with world-class architecture, a literal river of museums and parks, excellent beaches, and great food. In fact, it is the gastronomic touchstone for the entire country. The Moors introduced rice to Europe here, and Valencia combined it with the vegetables and legumes of its fertile alluvial plain, the shellfish of its coast, and the rabbits and snails of its gardens to give the world paella. The Levantine dishes of Spanish gastronomy all hail from Valencia, one of the world's great gastronomic destinations. Fourteen centuries after the Moors arrived, Valencia remains a major port of entry as the largest container shipping port in the Mediterranean.

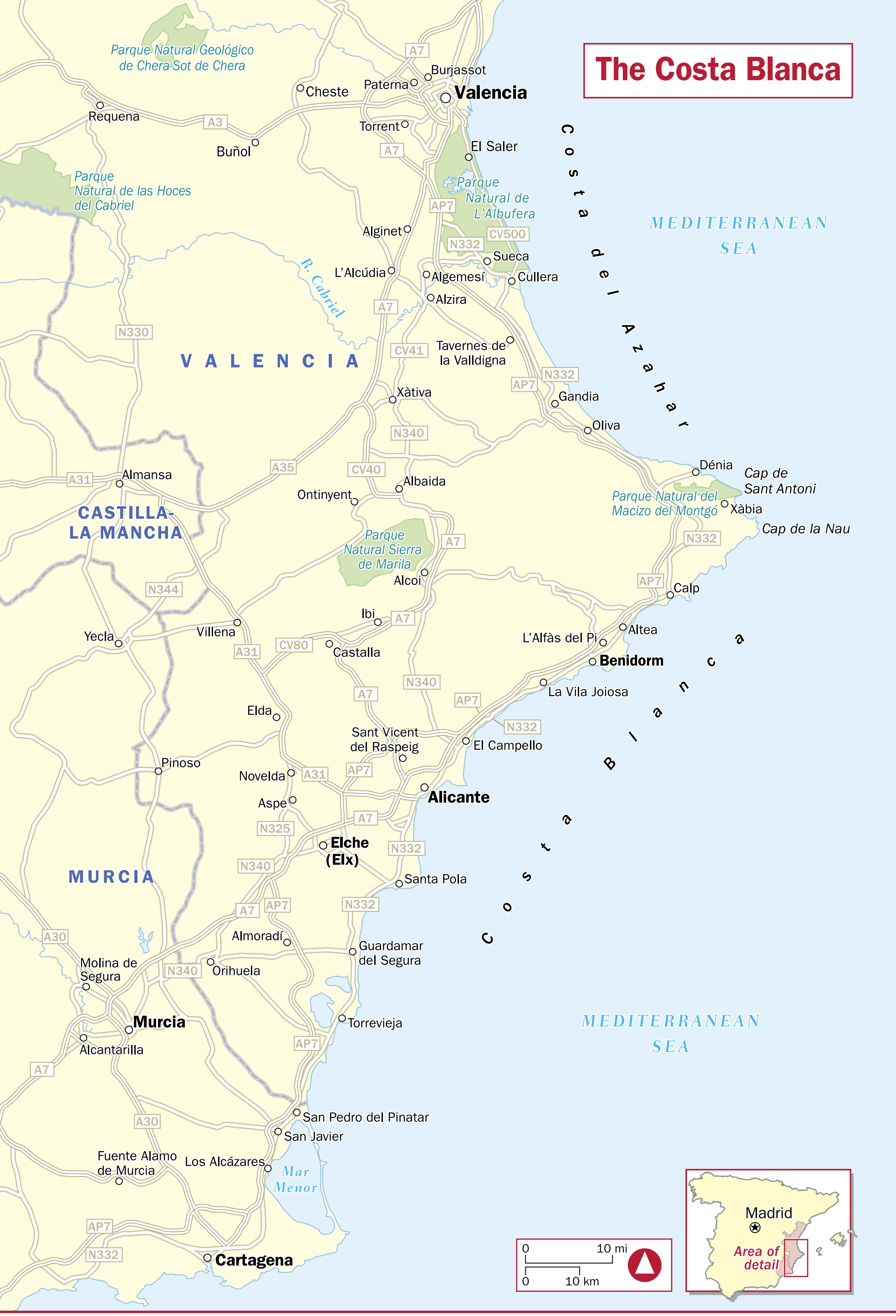
The **Costa Blanca (White Coast)** gets off to a slow start at Valencia's refinery district, south of the city, but quickly improves as it enters the natural reserve area of **L'Albufera** and winds its way south toward Alicante. The overbuilt route on the southern stretch is dotted with fishing ports and resorts best known among Spanish and other European vacationers. The success of **Benidorm** began in the 1960s, when this fishing village was transformed into an international resort. **Alicante**, the official capital of the Costa Blanca, enjoys a reputation as a winter resort because of its mild climate.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN VALENCIA & THE COSTA BLANCA

- **Eating paella at the beach in Valencia:** No paella in Spain can rival that made in Valencia, where the dish was born. And few places so embody the city's grand gastronomic traditions as La Pepica, a veritable palace of seafood and paella located on Playa Malvarossa.
- **Seeing the future at the City of Arts and Sciences:** From the ceremonial entry over the 18m-high (59 ft.) rib-cage bridge of L'Umbracle to the blinking "Eye of Wisdom" at the planetarium of L'Hemisfèric to the walk-through deep-ocean tank in L'Oceanogràfic, the futuristic architecture of this minicity of museums and attractions dazzles the eye and delights the mind.
- **Lording it over land and sea from Castell de Santa Bárbera:** Carthaginians, Romans, Moors, and Spaniards all appreciated the view from the mountain that towers over Alicante's harbor. They could see an enemy who was still a day away. You can see the sweep of the countryside and the rolling sea.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **Picnicking in front of the Catedral of Valencia.**

The Costa Blanca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CASTILLA-LA MANCHA
Parque Natural Sierra de Marila
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Elche (Elx)
Santa Pola
MURCIA
Costa Blanca
Almoradí
Guardamar del Segura
Molina de Segura
Orihuela
Murcia
Alcantarilla
Torrevieja
San Pedro del Pinatar
San Javier
Fuente Alamo de Murcia
Los Alcázares
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- **Bird-watching in L'Albufera:** Birding is easy in the natural reserve south of Valencia. The reed islands in the marshes of the vast wetland are filled with night, squacco, gray, and purple herons as well as a variety of egrets. Thousands of ducks feed in the rice fields over the winter.
- **Scoring a deal on shoes in Elche:** Three-quarters of the Spanish footwear industry calls this ancient city home—and many of them have factory stores where they sell their fashionable shoes and boots for a discount.

VALENCIA ★★

351km (218 miles) SE of Madrid, 361km (224 miles) SW of Barcelona, 650km (404 miles) NE of Málaga

Valencia's geography is its history. The easternmost sheltered harbor on the central Iberian coast, it had the good and bad luck to be a stepping stone from North Africa to central Spain, and from central Spain to North Africa. El Cid faced off the Moors here—and the Moors drove his successors back into the mountains to recapture the strategic port. The city changed hands constantly over the centuries.

Between the container ships shuttling to and from China and the petroleum tankers (there are nearly four dozen refineries in or near Valencia), the port is still Valencia's lifeblood. Yet the industry is so sequestered and so clean that visitors never see it unless they bicycle along the coast to L'Albufera to see the ancient rice paddies (see "Side Trip from Valencia," p. 417).

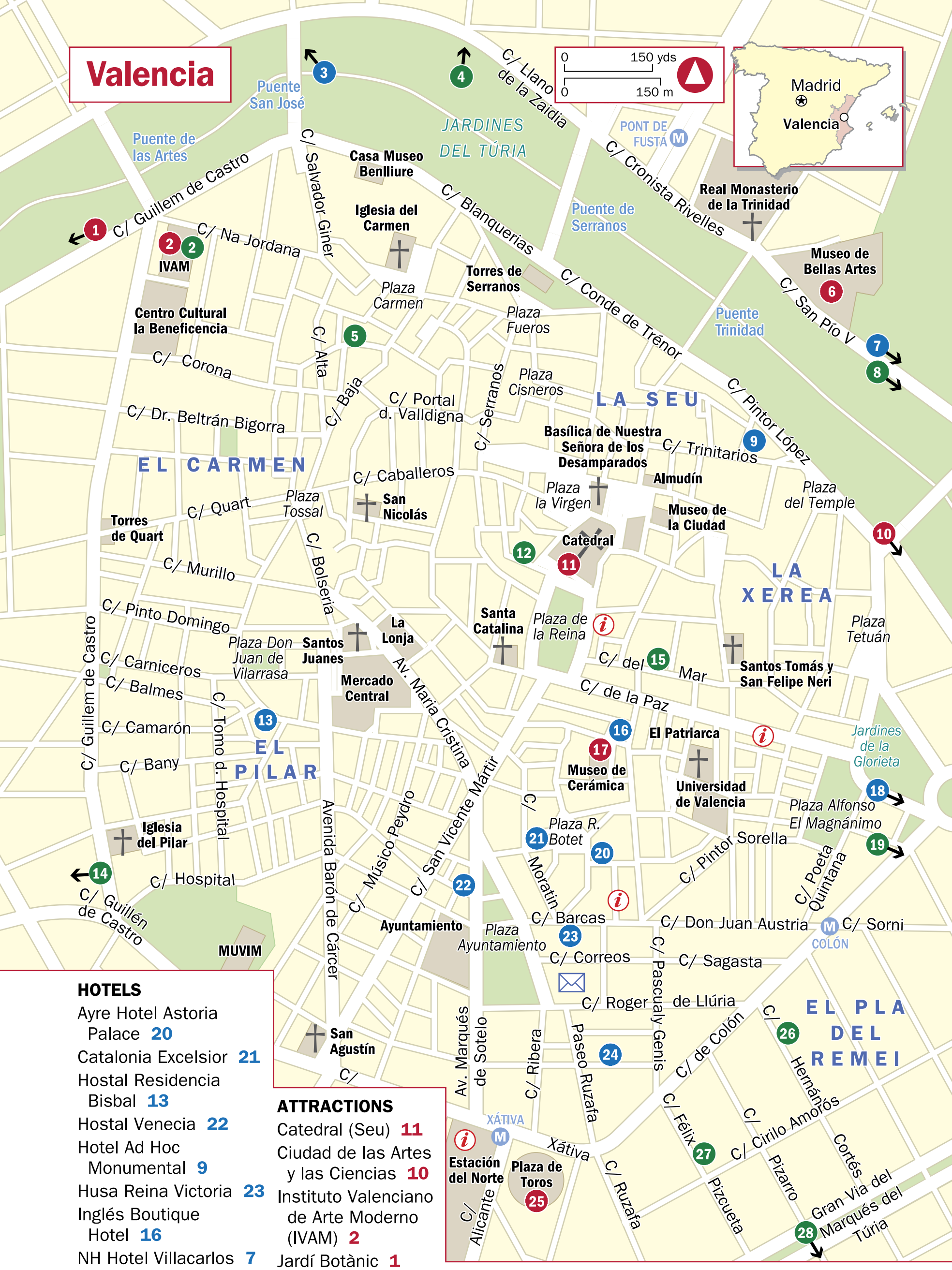
The city endured terrible floods in 1957, which led to burying the Turia River, which had encircled the city. The resulting dry riverbed was transformed into a 10km (6¼-mile) parkland. Even more transformative was the construction of the City of Arts and Sciences on the southeastern corner of that park. The futuristic architecture of native son Santiago Calatrava and seminal Spanish-Mexican architect Félix Candela easily rivals Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, and has spurred further renovation and construction throughout Valencia.

Calatrava (b. 1951), one of Spain's most visionary and controversial contemporary designers and architects, is only the latest figure in Valencia's strong cultural tradition. Writer Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1867–1928) is best known for his novel about bullfighting, *Blood and Sand,* and for his World War I novel, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Both were filmed twice in Hollywood, with Rudolph Valentino starring in the first version of each. Joaquín Sorolla (1863–1923), the famous Spanish painter, was another native of Valencia. You can see his works at a museum dedicated to him in Madrid (p. 85).

Essentials

GETTING THERE Iberia flies to Valencia from Barcelona, Madrid, Málaga, and many other cities. There are also flights between Palma (Mallorca) and Valencia. For flight information contact the **Iberia Airlines** office, Calle Paz 14 (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**). You'll land 15km (9⅓ miles) southwest of the city. To travel between the airport and the city center, take Metro line 3 or 5; a one-way ticket costs 1.40€. For more information call ✆ **90-046-10-46.** A taxi (✆ **96-370-33-33**) from the airport to the town center goes for around 15€.

Trains run to Valencia from all parts of Spain. Estación del Norte (North station), Calle Játiva 2, sits just south of the heart of the city, making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Iglesia del Carmen
C/ Blanquerias
Puente de Serranos
Torres de Serranos
C/ Conde de Trénor
Museo de Bellas Artes
6
C/ San Pío V
Puente Trinidad
7
8
Plaza Carmen
Centro Cultural la Beneficencia
C/ Corona
C/ Alta
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C/ Baja
Plaza Fueros
Plaza Cisneros
C/ Portal d. Valldigna
C/ Serranos
LA SEU
C/ Pintor López
C/ Dr. Beltrán Bigorra
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it a convenient arrival point. It's also a landmark *modernista* building. Its information office on Calle Renfe (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) is open Monday to Friday 8am to 9pm. From Barcelona, 15 trains—including the TALGO, which takes 3½ hours—arrive daily. At least 14 trains daily connect Madrid with Valencia, with the Alvia high-speed train taking about 2 hours and the AVE only 100 minutes. From Málaga, on the Costa del Sol, the trip takes 9 hours. (It is only 5 hr. from Linares-Baeza.)

Buses arrive at Valencia's Estació Terminal d'Autobuses, Av. de Menéndez Pidal 13 (✆ **96-346-62-66**), about a 30-minute walk northwest of the city's center. Take bus no. 8 from the Plaza del Ayuntamiento. Thirteen buses a day run from Madrid (trip time: 4 hr.), 10 buses from Barcelona (trip time: 5 hr.), and five buses from Málaga (trip time: 8 hr.).

You can take a **ferry** to and from the Balearic Islands (p. 698). Ferries to Palma (Mallorca) take 6 hours. Ferries leave Valencia for Ibiza at midnight Tuesday to Sunday from March to September. In winter, there is one ferry per week. Travel agents in Valencia sell tickets, or you can buy them from the Trasmediterránea office at the port, Estació Marítim (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **90-245-46-45**), on the day of your departure. To reach the port, take bus no. 4 or 19 from the Plaza del Ayuntamiento. Ferries from Mallorca to Valencia leave from Estació Marítim 2. Call ✆ **90-245-46-45** for details.

The easiest route if you're driving is the express highway (E-15) south from Barcelona. You can also use a national highway, E-901, from Madrid northwest of Valencia. From Alicante, take the E-15 express highway north. If you're coming from Andalucía, the roads are longer, more difficult, and not connected by express highways. You can drive from Málaga north to Granada and cut across southeastern Spain on the 342, which links with the 340 into Murcia. From there, take the road to Alicante for an easy drive into Valencia. The Barcelona-Valencia toll is 25€.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Calle Paz 48 (www.comunitatvalenciana.com; ✆ **96-398-64-22**). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 8pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

GETTING AROUND Most **local buses** leave from Plaza del Ayuntamiento 22. You can buy tickets at any newsstand. The one-way fare is 1.30€; a 10-ride booklet sells for 7€. Bus no. 8 runs from Plaza del Ayuntamiento to the bus station at Avenida Menéndez Pidal. A bus map is available at the EMT office, Calle Correo Viejo 5. It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm. For bus information, call ✆ **96-315-85-15.** The **Metro** system (www.metrovalencia.es; ✆ **90-046-10-46**) is more efficient than the bus. It covers the Old Town well and also branches out to the outskirts, including the beaches. You can purchase tickets from automatic machines in any station; the cost ranges from 1.40€ for one zone to 1.90€ for two zones. A *bonometro,* good for 10 trips in the zones indicated, is a better deal, selling for 6.60€ for one zone or 9.50€ for two zones.

If you need a taxi, call ✆ **96-370-33-33.**

Valencia is flat and easy to pedal, making it nearly ideal for cycling. One excellent bike rental agency in the heart of the Old Town is **Orange Bikes** (www.orangebikes.net; ✆ **96-391-75-51**), Calle Editor Manuel Aguilar 1. The shop is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2:30pm and 4:30

to 7:30pm, and Saturday 10am to 2pm (and 7–7:30pm for bike returns). Rates are 9€ to 12€ per day, slightly more for an electric bike.

SPECIAL EVENTS **Las Fallas de San José,** honoring the arrival of spring and the memory of St. Joseph, is held March 15 to March 19. It is a time for parades, street dancing, fireworks, and bullfights. Neighborhoods compete to see who can erect the most intricate and satirical papier-mâché effigy, or *ninot*. Some 300 *ninots* then appear in the street parades. The festival ends with *la nit del foc,* or "fire night," when effigies are burned. Historically, this inferno was to exorcise social problems and bring luck to farmers in the coming summer. In practice, it is the largest and loudest party in Europe.

FAST FACTS In a medical emergency, call ✆ **112;** or go to the **Hospital Clínico Universitario,** Av. Blasco Ibáñez 17 (✆ **96-386-26-00**).

Don't be surprised if you see signs in a language that's neither Spanish nor Catalán. It is **Valenciano,** a dialect of Catalán. Often you'll be handed a "bilingual" menu in Castilian Spanish and in Valenciano. Many older citizens of Valencia are dubious about this post-Franco cultural resurgence and view the promotion of the dialect as possibly damaging the city's economic goals. Many younger citizens actually speak the language. Most street names appear in Valenciano.

There are many Internet cafes in Valencia, the most reliable of which is a photocopy and print shop called **Work Center,** open Monday to Friday 7am to 11pm, Saturday and Sunday noon to 9pm; it's at Colón 84 (✆ **96-353-69-19**), in front of the bullring and Estación del Norte.

Exploring Valencia

Corridas (bullfights) are staged during Las Fallas in March. Today locals seem more interested in soccer than in bullfighting. Nevertheless, Valencia's **Plaza de**

The Plaza de Toros bullring.

Toros is one of the largest rings in Spain; it's adjacent to the rail station at Calle de Xátiva 28 (✆ **96-351-93-15**).

As a respite from the heat, retreat to the **Jardí Botànic,** Calle Quart 80 (www.jardibotanic.org; ✆ **96-315-68-00**), which was founded by the University of Valencia in 1567. For 2 centuries it was an orchard for medicinal plants, and botany classes are still offered. Today it boasts one of the most important collections of varied tree life and palms in Europe. In all, nearly 45,000 international species are displayed. Admission is 2€ (free for children 6 and under). Hours are daily May to August 10am to 9pm, April and September 10am to 8pm, March and October 10am to 7pm, and November to February 10am to 6pm (Metro: Turia and Angel Guimerà).

Catedral (Seu) ★ CATHEDRAL For 500 years, this cathedral has claimed to possess the **Holy Grail,** the chalice Jesus used at the Last Supper; it's on display in a side chapel. The subject of countless legends, the Grail was said to have been used by Joseph of Arimathea to collect Jesus's blood as it dripped from the cross. It looms large in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* and Wagner's *Parsifal.*

Although this 1262 cathedral represents a number of styles, including Romanesque and baroque, Gothic predominates. Its huge arches have been restored, and in back is a handsome domed basilica. It was built on the site of a mosque torn down by the Catholic monarchs.

After seeing the cathedral, you can climb the stairway inside the unfinished 47m-high (154-ft.) Gothic tower known as **Miguelete ★** ("Micalet" in Valenciano). It affords a panoramic view of the city and the fertile orchards and truck gardens beyond. Or visit the **Museo de la Catedral,** where works by Goya and Zurbarán are on exhibit.

Plaza de la Reina. www.catedraldevalencia.es. ✆ **96-391-81-27.** Admission to cathedral free; Miguelete 2.50€; Museo de la Catedral 4.50€. Cathedral daily 7:30am–1pm and 4:30–8:30pm.

The facade of the Catedral of Valencia.

Biking around the Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias.

Miguelete Mon–Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–1:30pm and 7–9pm. Museo de la Catedral Mon–Fri 10am–1pm and 4–7pm. Bus: 9, 27, 70, or 71.

Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias (City of Arts and Sciences) ★★★ ☺ MUSEUM In a bid to emulate Bilbao's resurgence in the wake of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, Valencia transformed unused dry riverbed into a museum district of unrivaled high architecture. It's in the southern part of the city, on a 36-hectare (89-acre) site in a carefully landscaped park of lush greenery and peaceful lagoons, and simply walking around to see the buildings from every angle is a worthy pastime. The goal of the complex is to make learning fun. The complex also serves as the site of the annual **Festival Eclèctic,** held on the third week of July and featuring free shows of acrobats, martial artists, street performers, and outdoor concerts. The state-of-the-art educational center consists of four main buildings.

Designed by award-winning architect Santiago Calatrava, **L'Hemisfèric ★** planetarium offers documentaries and an exploration of the universe. A laser show (with changing programs) runs on a 47-sq.-m (506-sq.-ft.) concave IMAX screen, with the soundtrack in four languages, and six-channel stereo.

Devoted to science and discovery, the **Museo de las Ciencias Príncipe Felipe** takes the form of a vast roof supported by a transparent glazed north facade and an opaque south facade. At the center, the visitor can look, touch, and feel in this "museum of sensations." The museum is filled with special exhibitions demonstrating the high technology of companies in the 21st century.

Eight hectares (20 acres) of the complex are devoted to **L'Oceanogràfic ★**, a series of lagoons and leisure pavilions arranged into an underwater city that recreates marine habitats from every ocean. There's also a dolphinarium for aquatic shows and a miniport for playing with remote-controlled boats. Submarine glass walkways connect the areas. An underwater restaurant is on-site.

A seemingly weightless 45m-high (148-ft.) glass-and-metal construction called the **Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía** contains one outdoor and two indoor auditoriums. All three have the latest technology for the performance of plays, opera, and music.

Av. Autopista del Saler 1, 3, 5, 7. www.cac.es. ✆ **90-210-00-31.** Admission to L'Hemisfèric 7.50€ adults; 5.80€ children 12 and under, students, and seniors. Admission to L'Oceanogràfic 24€ adults; 18€ children 12 and under, students, and seniors. Admission to Museo de las Ciencias Príncipe Felipe 7.50€ adults; 5.80€ children 16 and under, students, and seniors. L'Hemisfèric daily 10am–9pm. Museo de las Ciencias Príncipe Felipe and L'Oceanogràfic daily 10am–7pm (to midnight July–Sept). Bus: 19, 35, 40, or 95 to Centro Comercio de Saler.

Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (IVAM) ★ ART MUSEUM This contemporary art center jump-started a renaissance of art in Valencia. The giant complex consists of two sites: an ultramodern building and a 13th-century former convent. Its opening made Valencia a legitimate contender as a world art capital.

The **Centre Julio González** is named for the avant-garde Spanish artist whose paintings, sculptures, and drawings form the nucleus of the permanent collection. Much influenced by Picasso, González was a pioneer in iron sculpture. His work in turn exerted a profound influence on the American sculptor David Smith, among others.

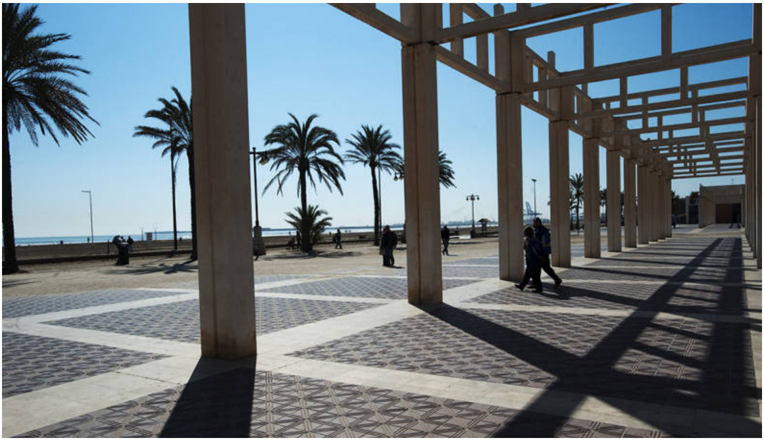
The other site is the nearby **Centre del Carmen,** the old convent, with cloisters from the 14th and 16th centuries. It devotes three halls to changing exhibits of contemporary art. Permanent displays include works of Ignacio Pinazo, whose paintings and drawings mark the beginning of modernism in Valencia. The institute is on the western edge of Old Town, near the **Torres de Quart,** 15th-century towers that guard the entrance to the city.

Calle Guillém Castro 118. www.ivam.es. ✆ **96-386-30-00.** Admission 2€ adults, free for children 9 and under. Tues–Sun 10am–8pm. Bus: 8, 28, or 29.

Museo de Bellas Artes ART MUSEUM Set on the north bank of the now-dry Turia River, this museum has a strong collection of Flemish and native Valencian art. Of particular note are works by the 14th- and 15th-century **Valencian "primitives"** ★★. The most celebrated painting is a 1640 self-portrait by Velázquez, and an entire room is devoted to Goya. Other artists exhibited include Bosch, Morales, El Greco (*St. John the Baptist*), Ribera, Murillo, Pinturicchio, and Sorolla. Of special interest is a salon displaying the works of contemporary Valencian painters and an important sculpture by Mariano Benlliure. The ground-floor archaeological collection encompasses early Iberian, Roman (including an altar to a pagan emperor), and Christian finds.

San Pío V 9. www.museobellasartesvalencia.gva.es. ✆ **96-387-03-00.** Free admission. Tues–Sun 10am–8pm. Bus: 1, 5, 6, 8, 16, 26, 29, 36, 79, or 95. Metro: Alameda.

Palacio de Marqués de Dos Aguas ★ PALACE This landmark palace houses the famous **Museo Nacional de Cerámica,** with one of the grandest collections of ceramics in Spain. The vast collection offers everything from lizards on plates to frogs riding the backs of lambs. In addition, there is a Gallery of Humorists, featuring caricatures of everybody from Einstein on down. The building—an exuberant mixture of rococo and Churrigueresque—competes for attention with the exhibits. In the 18th century, Ignacio Vergara carved the figures of *Dos Aguas (Two Waters),* the palace's namesake. Its history goes back to 1496, although the building's current look is predominantly 19th century. After you get your fill of art, a carriage museum and an armor room downstairs offer variety.



Playa Malvarrosa.

Poeta Querol 2. http://mnceramica.mcu.es. ✆ **96-351-63-92.** Admission 3€. Tues–Sun 10am–2pm; Tues–Sat 4–8pm. Metro: Plaza de los Pinazo.

Outdoor Activities

BEACHES

Valencia boasts more than 2.8km (1¾ miles) of beaches (*playas*) with excellent facilities. **Playa Arenas** and **Playa Malvarrosa** ★ are just minutes from the city center. Adjoining these beaches is the seafront promenade, **Paseo Marítimo** ★, where you can walk, jog, sunbathe, or roller-skate. The beaches to the north and south of the port, Playa de la Punta and Playa de Levante, are too polluted for swimming. However, if you head south, you'll reach **El Saler,** where you'll see the European blue flag waving—a signal of clear waters and golden sands.

BOATING

Real Club Náutico de Valencia, Camí del Canal 91 (www.rcnauticovalencia.com; ✆ **96-367-90-11**), has a sailing school that rents boats for scuba diving and snorkeling. It maintains a full yacht-service facility.

Where to Eat

VERY EXPENSIVE

Ca' Sento ★★★ VALENCIAN/MEDITERRANEAN Chef-owner Raúl Aleixandre is widely recognized as one of Spain's best young culinary talents, and he has transformed Ca' Sento from the highly regarded seafood restaurant of his parents into one of the top dining rooms in Spain. He continues to serve the *fideu* (a noodle version of paella) in the style of his mother, María Muria: with meltingly tender cuttlefish and baby squid and a side of aioli and squid ink. At the same time, he applies the lessons in experimentation he learned at elBulli under Ferran Adrià to create such unlikely dishes as crab and yucca "ice-cream cones" or duck liver flan with a tart green-apple aspic. Aleixandre goes to the docks every morning to personally select the fish and shellfish, taking special care with shrimp, prawns, *cigalas,* lobster, and "slipper lobster," known locally as *zapatilla.* The result is a

Drinking Like a Local

To be a true Valenciano, you have to head to Barrio del Carmen to visit **Sant Jaume,** a cafe at Carrer Cavalleros 51 (✆ **96-391-24-01**), and have a drink of *agua de Valencia.* It's a mixture of orange juice, Cointreau, and cava. The drink is said "to cure all that ails you," so it's appropriate that the building itself used to be an apothecary. An easy-to-miss tapas bar, beloved by local foodies, is at the front entrance to the restaurant **Ca'n Bermell,** Santo Tomás 18 (✆ **96-391-02-88**). The city's most famous drink, *horchata,* made with ground tiger nuts, is best at **Horchatería El Siglo,** Plaza Santa Catalina 11 (✆ **96-391-84-66**).

distinctive personal cuisine that bridges Valencia's gastronomic legacy and the new Spanish cooking. The ultramodern dining room is elegant and chic, with carefully chosen artwork.

Méndez Núñez 17. www.casento.net. ✆ **96-330-17-75.** Reservations required. Main courses 35€–40€; *menú degustación* 60€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 19, 35, 40, or 95. Closed last 2 weeks of Mar.

Eladio ★★ SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL Borrowing from culinary concepts he learned during his apprenticeship in Switzerland, Eladio Rodríguez prepares flavorful cuisine based on seasonal ingredients. The menu changes daily depending on what is fresh and available. Diners particularly praise his shellfish and fish from his native Galicia, which might include hake, monkfish, or sea bass, prepared as simply or as elaborately as you want. Many customers order fish grilled over charcoal and served with garlic-butter sauce. Other noteworthy dishes include baby-squid salad, hake with clams in a green sauce, beef stroganoff flambé with vodka, and a lobster-and-anglerfish stew. The setting is calm and pleasant.

Calle Chiva 40. www.restauranteeladio.es. ✆ **96-384-22-44.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Aug. Bus: 3, 70, or 72.

Joaquín Schmidt ★ ☺ MEDITERRANEAN Of German parents but born in Madrid, Joaquín Schmidt Río-Valle is becoming one of the best-known chefs in Valencia. His restaurant shines brightly because of his philosophy of "preparing each menu as if I'm cooking for cherished friends." With an impressive wine list to back up his culinary creations, his food always rises above the merely routine or even the merely competent. All dishes are prepared using only extra-virgin olive oils, the best of balsamic vinegars, and special salts he imports from Brittany and Great Britain. The gourmand menu is offered at half-price on the last Tuesday of every month.

Calle Visitación N7. www.joaquinschmidt.com. ✆ **96-340-17-10.** Reservations required. Fixed-price menus 40€, 45€, and 56€. AE, MC, V. Mon 9–11:30pm; Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Bus: N3, 1, 28, 29, 79, 95.

EXPENSIVE

La Pepica ★ SEAFOOD/VALENCIAN This erstwhile Hemingway haunt on Playa Malvarossa, established in 1898, is still in its heyday. Founder Don Ernesto is long gone, but the same dishes that used to lure royalty and celebrities are still on the menu at this grand seafront restaurant. La Pepica is most famous for its multiple versions of paella, including a pricy edition featuring fresh lobster. Grilled and fried seafood share equal billing, and the shellfish and crustacean dishes are perfectly executed classics. Finish off the meal with a fresh-fruit tart.

El Paseo Neptuno 6–8, La Playa de las Arenas. www.lapepica.com. ☎ **96-371-03-66.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–35€; tasting menu 37€–40€ with wine. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 8:30–11pm. Closed last 2 weeks of Nov. Bus: 1, 2, 19, 20, 21, 22, 30, 31, or 81.

La Sucursal VALENCIAN Located within the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (IVAM; p. 406), the minimalist design of this restaurant complements the galleries. The kitchen is known for soupy rice dishes prepared in deep casseroles instead of in paella pans. Of these dishes, the specialty that wins local raves is *arroz caldoso de bogavante,* made with bits of lobster and seasoned with saffron and paprika. Unusual dishes include a carpaccio made of deer and an "octopus cake" seasoned with brie and fresh herbs. You can also order a loin of beef in a rosemary *jus* sauce, followed by a platter of both sheep and goat milk cheeses from the nearby mountains of Espadán. End your meal with a winning pistachio sorbet, or even a beet compote with fresh cheese ice cream and seasonal berries. The wine list includes many regional bottles.

Guillém de Castro 118. www.restaurantelasucursal.com. ☎ **96-374-66-65.** Reservations required. Main courses 25€–34€; fixed-price menus 48€–70€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Closed 1 week in Aug. Bus: 5.

Torrijos ★★ MEDITERRANEAN/VALENCIAN As Valencia has done for millennia, this lovely restaurant looks to the whole Mediterranean basin for inspiration. In the end, though, owner and chef Josep Quintana, who spent some years cooking in Switzerland, comes back to rice dishes as his greatest achievements. Rice with *rape* (monkfish) and artichokes is excellent, as is rice with king prawns. Fish from both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic appear frequently on the menu. Quintana also prepares a delicious foie gras course of thin layers of foie gras, dried beef, and caramelized apple. Wine buffs should note that there are some 25,000 quality bottles in his cellar. The restaurant is centrally located in the Barrio Ruzafa.

Calle Dr. Sumsi 4. ☎ **96-373-29-49.** Reservations required. Main courses 21€–38€; fixed-price menus 35€, 68€, and 80€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:45pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Jan 6–15, 1 week at Easter, and Aug 15–Sept 15. Metro: Colón.

MODERATE

El Timonel ★ MEDITERRANEAN/SEAFOOD Since 1997, discerning diners have headed for the domain of chef-owner Jaime Sauz, whose restaurant lies 2 blocks east of the Plaza de Toros. The comfortable, cozy interior is decorated in a nautical theme to emphasize the chef's use of fresh fish and seafood. Expect to find a menu featuring bass, flounder, red mullet, and a delectable local white fish called *lliva.* The fish is usually grilled. Sauz believes if the product is fresh enough, it doesn't have to be mucked up with a lot of sauces. One of the best dishes is *dorada a la sal,* gilthead sea bream baked in a coating of salt to seal in its juices. Rice dishes blended with seafood (similar to paella) have always been one of the mainstays of the local diet, and excellent ones are served here—none better than *arroz de bogavante,* or rice with prawns and lobster. Meat eaters might prefer the *chuletón de buey* (breaded beef chops) or *chuleticas de cordero lechal* (small spring lamb cutlets).

Félix Pizcueta 13. www.eltimonel.com. ✆ **96-352-63-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–29€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–4:30pm and 8:15–11:30pm. Metro: Corte Inglés.

La Lola ★ MEDITERRANEAN/INTERNATIONAL This imaginative restaurant in the Barrio del Carmen is visually and gastronomically electric. The minimalist modern decor is a dramatic black, red, and white—and the food is equally bold. Starters include ice cream made with virgin olive oil over a tomato-and-olive sauce. The eager-to-please staff will tempt you with such delightful main courses as codfish with caramelized saffron and honey, or Argentine baby beef loin with watermelon sorbet and *jamón serrano* (cured ham). Diners with more conventional tastes should try the grilled sea bass with green pepper and a cauliflower purée, or the grilled pork steak with a mushroom purée.

Subida del Toledano 8. www.lalolarestaurante.com. ✆ **96-391-80-45.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–25€; fixed-price dinner 29€–45€, lunch 29€ (Mon–Thurs only). MC, V. Mon–Sat 2–4pm and 9pm–2am; Sun 2–4pm. Bus: 2, 4, 6, or 7.

La Riuà VALENCIAN Set in Valencia's historic core, a short walk from Plaza de la Reina and the cathedral, this well-managed restaurant does a good business with local residents and an even bigger one with tourists. There's no outdoor terrace (the congestion of the urban neighborhood prevents that), but you'll get a good view of traditional local decorative styles from the tiles and ceramics that adorn the walls of its cozy dining rooms. The menu is a lexicon of traditional Valenciano dishes, including virtually every kind of fish (grilled, fried, or baked, in some cases within a salt crust) that exists in the western Mediterranean. In addition to several (heavily salted) paellas, La Riuà also offers fish that's served with three distinctly different seasoned rices, including one flavored with squid ink. Meats include spicy sausages; roasted pork; and tender, well-flavored veal. Stewed octopus (*pulpitos guisados*) is a favorite that many locals remember from their childhood. The restaurant's name, incidentally, translates from the Valenciano dialect as "the spot where the river meets the sea."

Calle del Mar 27. www.lariua.com. ✆ **96-391-45-71.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 2–4:15pm and 9–11pm. Closed Aug and Easter. Bus: 4.

Palace Fesol VALENCIAN In the years after World War I, the Palace Fesol became famous for its namesake specialty, fava beans, which continue to be a lunchtime favorite. Today many more excellent dishes grace the menu at the "bean palace," with typical Valencian paella high on the list at lunch. You can also order several chicken dishes served with rice. Other selections include grilled catch of the day, baby hake, baby lamb cutlets, and chateaubriand. Photos of film stars, bullfighters, and other celebrities line the walls. The beamed-ceiling restaurant is cooled by old-fashioned ceiling fans and decorated with lanterns and a hand-painted tile mosaic.

Hernán Cortés 7. www.palacefesol.com. ✆ **96-352-93-23.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 9–11pm. Closed Sat–Sun July–Aug. Bus: 5. Metro: Colón.

INEXPENSIVE

Ca'n Bermell ★ 🎁 VALENCIAN This restaurant lies in the Barrio del Carmen behind the cathedral—Valencia's oldest district—in a lovely 1600s building.

Emilio Bermell has built up a reputation as one of the best chefs in the city. Each day he goes to the sprawling marketplace to select only the best local ingredients, which he crafts into delicious plates like honeycombs stuffed with foie gras. A great opener is the superb mushroom salad made with fresh fruit from the region. For a main course, try the codfish stuffed with onions and served with a tangy green-pepper sauce. Duck breast served with a Rioja wine sauce is immensely appealing as well.

Calle Santo Tomás 18. www.canbermell.com. ☎ **96-391-02-88.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 8€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon 8:30–11pm; Tues–Sat 1:30–3pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Angel Guimerà.

Casa Montaña ★ TAPAS An institution since 1836, this barrel-filled bodega serves the tastiest tapas in Valencia. Locals and visiting foodies convene not just for the tapas but also for the inexpensive wines by the glass. Montaña also has an amazing cellar of another 800 to 1,000 bottles—proprietor Emiliano Garcia often invites customers to slide under the bar to see it. It's a good idea to come with several people so you can sample a little bit of everything, including anchovies from Santoña, stewed fava beans, codfish croquettes, and Valencia *clochinas* (mussels) in season. Grilled sardines come straight from the boats in Castellón. Another favorite small casserole is *titaina*—the strongest flavored parts of the tuna stewed with fresh tomatoes, peppers, and pine nuts.

Calle José Benlliure 69. www.emilianobodega.com. ☎ **96-367-23-14.** Reservations not necessary. Tapas 5€–20€. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3:30pm and 8–11:30pm; Sun 12:30–3:30pm. Metro: Mediterrani.

Shopping

You haven't seen Valencia until you've headed for the 1920s **Mercado Central ★★★**, on the Plaza del Mercado in the heart of the city. It stands across the street from **La Lonja,** the silk exchange that dates from 1482 and is one of the most splendid examples of secular Gothic architecture in Spain. After a visit to this "central market," you'll never want to shop in a supermarket

A fish vendor at the Mercado Central, Valencia's central market.

again. The market lies in a grand railway station–like building, with stained glass no less. It sells everything: blood sausage, ungracefully nude *poulets,* saffron, bomba rice for paella, even Marcona almonds. To see the women of Valencia shop for food is reason enough to go. To go home with bomba rice, smoked paprika, and a paella pan is worth the trip to Valencia.

If you're in Valencia on a Sunday morning, head for the open-air market at **Plaza Redonda** (literally "round square"). Found near the cathedral, it hawks traditional Valencian handicrafts, including ceramics, ironwork, silver items, and inlaid marquetry. Vendors also sell crafts from other regions of Spain, even Morocco. The best shopping areas include **Plaza del Ayuntamiento, Calle Don Juan de Austria, Calle Colón,** and the streets thereabouts. For a peek at what aging Valencian *dueñas* are storing in their cellars and attics, head for the *rastro* (flea market), on Avenida de Suecia near the soccer stadium, beginning around 8:30am every Sunday. The city's largest department store, **El Corte Inglés,** Calle Pintor Sorolla 26 (www.elcorteingles.es; ✆ **96-315-95-00**), sells a wide array of anything you might want, including local handicrafts, crystal and porcelain, and other luxury items.

The **Mercado de Colón** ★ in the heart of the city is a Gaudí-inspired fantasy that's a hub of many modern cafes, restaurants, crafts shops, and flower stalls. The market hall dates from 1916, when it opened in the center of Eixample, the city's most exclusive and residential area. Influenced by the celebrated architect Gaudí, the market was called "an epiphany of *modernista* architecture and a fusion of historicism and modernism." Several streets around the market also attract crowds, notably Calle Conde de Salvatierra, home to chocolatier **Cacao Sampaka** at no. 19 (www.cacaosampaka.com; ✆ **96-353-40-62**). Ever had a balsamic vinegar–flavored bonbon? The shop is a branch of the original co-founded by Ferran Adrià's brother Albert in Barcelona.

Valencia is home to some of Spain's best pottery. The region produces Lladró porcelain, Manises stoneware, and glassware. Local craftspeople take pride in their *azulejos*—brightly colored ceramic tiles, first developed during the Muslim occupation of Andalucía. Some of the best of Valencian crafts are sold at **Nela,** 2 Calle San Vicente (✆ **96-392-30-23**).

One of the best outlets for women's fashion along the eastern coast of Spain is **Linda Vuela a Río,** Gran Vía Marqués del Turia 31 (✆ **96-351-77-46**).

For more avant-garde fashion, head for **Tonuca,** Gran Vía Ramón Y Cajal 30 (✆ **96-394-05-55**). On the cutting edge, Tonuca Belloch-Burguera is the most avant-garde Valencian designer.

Everything from Chinese painted mirrors to Moroccan poufs is sold at a center for interior design, **Zara Home,** Carrer Jorge Juan 15 (✆ **96-351-32-52**).

On a street filled with antiques dealers, two of the best art galleries in Valencia are within walking distance of each other: **My Name's Lolita Art,** Carrer Avellanas 7 (www.mynameslolita.com; ✆ **96-391-13-72**), and **Galeria Valle Ortí,** Carrer Avellanas 22 (www.valleorti.com; ✆ **96-392-33-77**).

One worthy detour is to **Manises,** 9km (5⅔ miles) west of Valencia. It has been known as a center for ceramics and for its *azulejos* since the Middle Ages. Representatives from all the major kingdoms of Europe came here to purchase wares, which are characterized by their distinctive blue-and-white patterns. The town is packed with ceramics factories and retail outlets. From the center of Valencia, several buses run frequently to Manises.

Another good stop for the serious shopper is nearby **Paterna,** about 6.5km (4 miles) northwest of Valencia off C-234. (It's signposted all the way.) It has dozens of pottery stores with prices far below those in the center of Valencia.

Continuing farther north to the province of Castellón, you'll find the towns of **Alcora** and **Onda.** They're justly celebrated for their pottery, much of which is reasonably priced because you're buying direct from the producer. In addition to pottery, several shops in Onda sell some of the best-crafted *azulejos* in this part of Spain. **Alcora** is 19km (12 miles) northwest of Castellón de la Plana along the C-232; **Onda,** 15km (9⅓ miles) west along the C-223.

In the city of Valencia itself, head for **Lladró,** Calle Poeta Querol 9 (✆ **96-351-16-25**), where prices are consistent with those at other retail outlets. Or seek out the shop adjacent to the factory, **Casa de Lladró,** Carretera de Alborraya s/n, in the suburb of Tavernas Blanques (www.lladro.com; ✆ **90-021-10-10**), 5km (3 miles) north of the city center. The factory retail outlet sells slightly damaged or irregular pieces at lower prices. To visit the factory itself, call 1 month in advance.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Where you go at night in Valencia depends on when you visit. The best area in the cooler months is historic **Barrio Carmen,** in the city center. Valencia is famous for its *marcha* (nightlife) and for its bohemian bars. **Calle Alta** is a good street on which to start your *tasca* bar–crawl, as is the historic core around **Plaza del Ayuntamiento.** Some of the most evocative *tascas* don't even have clear signs—your best bet is to jump into and out of whichever ones appeal to you.

A longtime local favorite is **Barcas,** Barcas 7 (✆ **96-352-12-33**), among banks and office buildings in the heart of town directly north of Estación del Norte. It serves drinks and tapas (including small servings of paella) at the stand-up bar. You could conceivably stop here for your first cup of coffee at 7am and for your final nightcap at 1am. In the evening there is often live music. The establishment is more popular as a bar than as a restaurant. It's open daily from 7am to 1am. Drink prices start at 1.50€, and tapas cost 4€.

In the Barrio del Carmen, **Disco City,** Calle Pintor Zariñena 16 (✆ **96-391-41-51**), is a dance club with a black-on-black decor and a wall of mirrors lining the dance floor. It attracts the under-30 crowd, who come here to dance to funk, soul, and R&B. It's definitely for late-nighters: The scene doesn't get rolling until 3am. Cover is usually 15€.

In summer, the emphasis switches to the beach, Playa de Malvarrosa. Valencia is hot and steamy, and the cool night sea breezes are especially welcome. Everyone from teens to 40-somethings congregate around open-air bars, which play music, often have dance floors, and are open from late May to September. Drinks usually cost 3€ to 5€. There are also discos in this part of town, one of which is the **Akuarela Playa** (www.akuarela.es; ✆ **96-385-93-85**), Calle Eugenia Viñes 152. Cover is 10€ to 15€, and drinks are several euros more than in the open-air bars.

Valencia is Spain's third-biggest city and, after Madrid and Barcelona, the country's biggest gay center. Most of the action is in the historic center in the **Barrio Carmen,** particularly along Calle Quart. Valencia is a progressive, liberal city, and visitors need have no fear about being "out" on the street. For more information, interested parties can contact **Lambda,** Vivons 26 (www.lambdavalencia.org; ✆ **96-334-21-91**). There are many clubs, bars, coffee shops, saunas, hotels, and restaurants from which to choose. The best publication for what's happening, and when, is Madrid-based *Shangay,* distributed free in gay establishments.

As in many cities, gay men have to some degree elbowed lesbian interests out of the way. And as in the rest of Spain, the night starts late: 10pm is considered quite early. One of the best places for everyone is **Café de la Seu,** Calle Santo Caliz 7 (www.cafedelaseu.com; ✆ **96-391-57-15**), where you can get a relaxing alcoholic or herbal drink for 2€ to 5€ daily from 6pm to 2am. Go-go dancers evoking the '60s and drag shows make for lively evenings at **Venial,** Quart 26 (www.venialvalencia.com; ✆ **96-391-73-56**), with a cover that can vary with the event. Hot, sweaty bodies turn up here for Latino nights on Thursdays, house nights on Friday and Saturday, and just X-rated gay fun on Sunday. The dance floor is one of the most active in town. Take bus no. N4.

Much more highbrow than the nocturnal activities above, the **Palau de la Música ★★**, Paseo de la Alameda 30 (www.palaudevalencia.com; ✆ **96-357-50-20;** Metro: Alameda), presents an impressive array of 200-plus programs a year. The most prestigious orchestras in the world, as well as directors and soloists, appear here. Between September and October, the Valencia Orchestra is in residence. The fantastic hall seats 1,793 and has wonderful acoustics. After a concert here, Plácido Domingo claimed that "Palau is a Stradivarius." Held up by 10 porticoed pillars, the dome evokes a greenhouse; designer José María de Paredes won the national prize awarded annually for architecture. An on-site art gallery is open daily from 10:30am to 1:30pm and 5:30 to 9pm. Ticket prices vary depending on the program, but are generally in the 10€-to-90€ range.

Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía ★★, Autopista del Saler 1 (www.lesarts.com; ✆ **96-197-58-00**), is the grand opera house of Valencia. It's housed in a futuristic, helmet-shaped building that is part of the City of Arts and Sciences (p. 405). Some of the world's most prestigious opera companies perform here. Tickets, costing from 20€ to 175€, are sold at the box office Monday to Friday noon to 8pm.

Where to Stay

In July and August, when Valencia can be uncomfortably hot and humid, some hoteliers lower prices significantly if business is slow. It never hurts to ask.

EXPENSIVE

Ayre Hotel Astoria Palace On a small, charming square in the heart of town, this modern business hotel offers some of the best-furnished public and private rooms in Valencia. Favored by the well heeled and the famous, the Astoria is plush, well managed, and appealing. Many of the tastefully furnished guest rooms overlook a sculpture of Grecian maidens and swans in the square outside. The highest prices are for the three premium floors, which have a private lounge and separate check-in. The hotel is 5 short blocks south of the cathedral.

Plaza Rodrigo Botet 5, 46002 Valencia. www.ayrehoteles.com. ✆ **96-398-10-00.** Fax 96-398-10-11. 204 units. 85€–356€ double; 150€–407€ junior suite; 180€–814€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€ nearby. Bus: 9, 10, 27, 70, or 71. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Palau de la Mar ★★★ For those who appreciate good taste and elegant comfort, Palau de la Mar is among Valencia's finest places to stay. In a restored *palacio* built in the 1800s, this stylish boutique hotel lies in the heart of the city. The perfect blend of antique and modern contrasts heavily carved doors and intricate ironwork with steel, glass, and creamy-white textiles. Elegance, art, and design are happily combined here. The chief asset is a stunningly designed interior patio with a luxuriant garden. The bedrooms are cozy retreats, with crisp white bed linens set off against dark-wood floors. In an unusual bit of largesse, the minibar is complimentary.

Calle Navarro Reverter 14–16, 46004 Valencia. www.hospes.com. ☎ **96-316-28-84.** Fax 96-316-28-85. 66 units. 115€–179€ double; 160€–410€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Colón. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (95€–110€); babysitting; bikes; state-of-the-art health club and spa; indoor heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Sercotel Sorolla Palace This modern palace attracts both the business client and the leisure tourist. It's only a 10-minute ride from the city center in one of the Valencia's largest shopping and business districts. The sprawling hotel has more facilities and amenities than any of its rivals. Bedrooms are the latest statements in luxury and taste. They come in a wide range of styles, from a standard double to a spacious suite fit for a visiting president.

Av. Des Las Cortes Valencianas 58, 46015 Valencia. www.hotelsorollapalace.com. ☎ **96-186-87-00.** Fax 96-186-87-05. 271 units. 132€–159€ double; from 225€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 27€. Bus: 62. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar/cafe; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Vincci Lys ★ Just a 4-minute walk from the train station, this centrally located, completely restored hotel is one of the best bets for those who want to drop anchor at the very heart of Valencia. Located on a pedestrian-only street lined with cafes, it offers modern, functional space geared to the vacationer and the business traveler alike. Guest rooms are light, airy, and spacious, each with a well-maintained private bathroom. Nearly two dozen of the rooms have private balconies opening onto cityscapes. Some of the guest rooms are designed especially for women travelers.

Martínez Cubells 5, 46002 Valencia. www.vinccihoteles.com. ☎ **96-350-95-50.** Fax 96-350-95-52. 101 units. 74€–340€ double; 135€–655€ junior suite; 166€–755€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 27€. Bus: 4, 6, 8, 16, 35, or 36. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

The Westin Valencia ★★★ The major hotel in the region occupies the radically restored and almost unimaginably worked-over premises of what was originally built in 1917 as a textile mill, and which later functioned, during the Franco era, as a police and fire station. It reopened as a Westin in 2006 and is now considered by many to be the best hotel in Valencia, a three-story palace that's outfitted with dignity, comfort, and good taste. Bedrooms, decorated in warm tones of brown, evoke a vaguely Art Deco feeling, while public areas are plush, contemporary, and baronial. It lies close to the historic core of the city, about a 20-minute walk from the port.

Amadeo de Saboya 16, 46010 Valencia. www.starwoodhotels.com. ☎ **96-362-59-00.** Fax 96-362-59-09. 135 units. 132€–260€ double; from 295€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 23€. Metro: Aragón or Alameda. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; babysitting; bikes; concierge; health club indoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (18€ per 24 hr.).

MODERATE

Catalonia Excelsior ★ 🏷 This 1930s building has been sensitively restored and turned into one of the most welcoming and affordable hotels in the central part of town. The public rooms of the seven-floor structure are refreshing, especially the Art Deco–style restaurant with its adjacent bar. A spiral marble stairwell climbs to a mellow salon—paneled in dark cherrywood—that opens onto a terrace. Guest rooms range from small to midsize and have new carpeting and very comfortable beds, often with brass headboards.

Barcelonina 5, 46002 Valencia. www.hoteles-catalonia.es. ☎ **96-351-46-12.** Fax 96-352-34-78. 81 units. 59€–85€ double. AE, DC, V. Nearby parking 19€. Bus: 19, 35, 70, or 71. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Ad Hoc Monumental ★ 🎁 Owner Luis García Alarcón, an antiques dealer, is the inspiration behind this choice hotel in a sensitively restored building from the 1880s. One of Valencia's best-located hotels, it lies near the old source of the Turía River between the Torres Serranos (1391) and Civil Government (1763) buildings. Guest rooms, many with exposed brick walls, are soundproofed against traffic noise and are simply but tastefully furnished. Don't judge the hotel by its rather impersonal and ordinary facade—the warm interior will win you over. Note that the hotel's location on a small street is difficult to reach if you're driving because of a series of one-way streets.

Boix 4, 46003 Valencia. www.adhochoteles.com. ☎ **96-391-91-40.** Fax 96-391-36-67. 28 units. 82€–130€ double; 113€–190€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 9, 35, 70, or 71. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bikes; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Husa Reina Victoria ★ Restored after a long slumber, the Reina Victoria enjoys a reputation as the most architecturally glamorous hotel in Valencia. Built in 1913, the hotel has welcomed many distinguished guests, including Alfonso XIII and the hotel's namesake Queen Victoria herself, as well as Dalí, Manolete, Picasso, Falla, García Lorca, and Miró. Brimming with neoclassical detailing and wrought-iron accents, it overlooks the flower gardens and fountains of Valencia's central square, Plaza del País Valenciano. Room sizes range from small to medium (only a few are really spacious), and all units have midsize bathrooms. The hotel is in the heart of town, a 5-minute walk from the railway station.

Barcas 4, 46002 Valencia. www.husareinavictoria.com. ☎ **96-352-04-87.** Fax 96-352-27-21. 96 units. 67€–350€ double; 180€–400€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 4, 6, 7, 8, 14, or 27. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Inglés Boutique Hotel ★ This turn-of-the-20th-century hotel, the former palace of the duke and duchess of Cardona, has aged well. In the heart of old Valencia, it stands opposite another Churrigueresque palace. Guest rooms vary in size. Most overlook the tree-lined street and offer comforts such as sofa beds with fine linens and immaculately kept bathrooms. Ask for a room with a view of one of the city's many palaces. The service is discreet and polite.

Marqués de Dos Aguas 6, 46002 Valencia. www.hotelinglesboutique.com. ☎ **96-351-64-26.** Fax 93-272-41-49. 63 units. 75€–135€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 22€. Bus: 6, 9, 31, or 32. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (6.50€ per hr.).

NH Hotel Villacarlos Located close to the river, this hotel is within easy walking distance of most of the city's monuments. Following Barcelona's lead, Valencia has been keen to adopt the new, and the Hotel Villacarlos is a prime example. It has a simple postmodern facade that makes the reception area's bright-orange decor all the more surprising. Abstract paintings in orange and blue (the hotel's color scheme) adorn the walls—remember your sunglasses if you have a headache. The color scheme has been kept to a minimum in the guest rooms, at least. Furniture is functional and new, including comfortable beds and full-length mirrors.

Av. del Puerto 60, 46023 Valencia. www.nh-hotels.com. ✆ **96-337-50-25.** Fax 96-337-50-74. 51 units. 50€–80€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 1, 2, 3, or 4. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bikes; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (11€ per 24 hr.).

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Residencia Bisbal Conveniently located in the Old Town, this husband-and-wife operation offers simply furnished rooms. They're a bit small, but tidy and comfortable. No meals are served, and the hotel offers no real luxuries, but you'll find many bars and restaurants nearby. The staff is very helpful.

Pie de la Cruz 9, 46001 Valencia. ✆ **96-391-70-84.** Fax 96-392-37-37. 10 units. 40€–65€ double; 65€–85€ triple. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 17€. Bus: 8, 27, 29, or 81. *In room:* No phone.

Hostal Venecia ★ 🏷 In the city center around the corner from the town hall, this budget hotel is an excellent value. You don't get frills here, but you are rewarded with an immaculate hotel with well-maintained and comfortable guest rooms. The rooms have a rather minimal decor; each comes with a small bathroom. Despite its simplicity, the Venecia has won several awards from Spanish hotel guides.

Plaza del Ayuntamiento 3, 46002 Valencia. www.hotelvenecia.com. ✆ **96-352-42-67.** Fax 96-352-44-21. 54 units. 70€–90€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 25€. Bus: 19, 35, 70, or 71. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Side Trip from Valencia

PARQUE NATURAL DE L'ALBUFERA★

Only about 13km (8 miles) south of the city center on N-332, this stunning region is also easily visited by bicycle, as much of the roadway is paralleled by a bicycle path. (See "Getting Around," p. 402, for bike-rental details.)

Rice farmers have labored in the flooded fields around **L'Albufera**—an inlet closed off from the sea for so long that the water has become fresh—since the 700s, but the 21-sq.-km (8-sq.-mile) ecosystem of freshwater lake, lagoons, and barrier beach and dunes was only declared a natural reserve in 1986. Rice fields still cover about two-thirds of the area, and produce the bulk of the tall, hard-to-cultivate Bomba strain that's optimal for paella.

Nowhere is the contrast of built and natural environments as striking as at the beach in the village of **El Saler.** The eastern view zeroes in on cargo ships and tankers in Valencia's industrial port, yet shore birds practically cover the beach of smooth flat stones.

El Saler sits between the sea and the freshwater lake. You may see fishermen in small, flat-bottomed boats on the lake, mostly catching mullet or collecting American red crayfish, a crustacean introduced in the 1970s that is prized for paella. The wetlands between fresh water and saltwater rank among the Iberian Peninsula's most important breeding grounds for night, squacco, and purple herons (more than 5,000 breeding pairs) and four varieties of terns. For details on birding in the park, see exhibits and bird checklist at the **Racó de l'Olla Centre d'Interpretación** (http://parquesnaturales.gva.es; ✆ **96-162-73-45**), located at the El Palmar turnoff from CV-500. The center is open daily 9am to 2pm, as well as Tuesday and Thursday 4 to 5:30pm from May through October.

BENIDORM

43km (27 miles) NE of Alicante, 135km (84 miles) S of Valencia

Before tourists discovered its 6km (3¾ miles) of beaches, Benidorm was a tiny fishing village. Now summer vacationers pour in and a new concrete hotel seems to be built every day. With its heavy northern European influence, Benidorm has become the most overrun beach town east of Torremolinos. It has both ardent fans and determined detractors.

According to an 1890s guidebook, Benidorm was a "very tranquil place where drunkenness was unknown." Change overcame the resort by the 1970s and 1980s, when it attracted a rowdy, beer-drinking crowd. Today, some 180,000 people a day visit the long beach strip.

City officials have been trying to clean up Benidorm's image and make it more of an upmarket (rather than package-tour) destination. Aiguera Park and its amphitheater exemplify the change. It offers such free cultural activities as dancing, jazz, soul music, and even a Russian choir.

Despite efforts to upgrade, Benidorm still has high-rises that are booked for economical package tours. In winter, pensioners from all over Europe, even Russia, fill the villas and small hotels. In summer, however, the place takes on a much more youthful aura. The resort has a 5km (3-mile) fine white-sand beach divided in two by a rocky promontory.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Alicante, there are hourly **train** departures for Benidorm. **Buses** from Valencia and Alicante leave almost hourly, too.

If you're driving, take the E-15 expressway south from Valencia or north from Alicante. The one-way toll from Alicante to Benidorm is 8€; the one-way toll from Valencia to Benidorm is 13€.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Av. Martínez Alejos 16 (www.benidorm.org; ✆ **96-585-13-11**). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 10am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 7pm.

Where to Eat

Casa Toni ANDALUCÍAN/VALENCIAN Locals and visitors alike swear by the food served under wooden beams hanging with cured hams at this homey bistro that features a menu of freshly caught seafood and flavorful meat dishes—many evoking the flavors of Andalucía, the owner's home region. You can enjoy fresh squid and several Valencian rice dishes, and a platter of grilled ribs is a local favorite, as is marinated tuna belly. The bar is one of the best places in the area for tapas.

Av. De Cuenca. ✆ **96-680-12-32.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm.

Entertainment & Nightlife

The best nightclub in the region is **Benidorm Palace,** Carretera Dr. Severo Ochoa 13, Rincón de Loix (www.benidorm-palace.com; ✆ **96-585-16-60**). The cover (including one drink) is a steep 23€ to 55€, but the place features the latest music, a large dance floor, and one of the biggest stages in Europe (40m/131 ft. wide). The stage fills with international artists, often entertaining an audience of 1,500. Shows have ranged from "Hurrah for Hollywood" to Russian dancers.

Always count on glamorous dancing women as part of the show. There are expansive bars and ample seating. The club is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10pm to 2am; shows start at 10pm. Drinks cost 4€.

Casino Mediterráneo, N-332 Km 141.5 (www.casinomediterraneo.es; ✆ **90-233-21-41**), offers gambling in a modern building surrounded by the rolling hills of the Costa Blanca. Most visitors come to try their hand at roulette (French and American), blackjack, and *boules*. An on-site restaurant serves a la carte Spanish meals ranging from 30€ to 50€ per person every evening from 9pm to 2am. The casino is open daily 4pm to 4am. It's about 4km (2½ miles) from Benidorm, beside the highway to Alicante. Casino admission is 3€ and requires a passport.

Where to Stay

Between mid-June and September, make sure you reserve a room in advance. If you arrive without a reservation, you'll be out of luck. During this time hotel managers often slap the full-board requirement onto their rates. To beat this, book one of the rare *residencias,* which serve only breakfast.

Belroy ★★ A few steps from the port, this centrally located first-class hotel is not quite in the same league as Meliá Benidorm (see below), but it is the most daringly modern and sophisticated at the resort. Each of its spacious bedrooms is furnished in a minimalist style that is almost Japanese in its simplicity, and each unit opens onto a panoramic view. The hotel lies only 50m (164 ft.) from Levante Beach and a 5-minute walk from the center of Benidorm. Pale pastel walls, travertine floors, and advanced modern lighting and technology are found throughout. As the sun sets, guests gather on Alaire Terrace.

Av. Mediterráneo 13, 03503 Benidorm. www.belroy.es. ✆ **96-585-02-03.** Fax 96-586-37-32. 125 units. 48€–210€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Gran Hotel Delfín This 1960s hotel is located beside the very popular Poniente Beach, about 3km (1¾ miles) west of the town center, away from the traffic-clogged mayhem that sometimes overwhelms central Benidorm. The hotel caters to a sun-loving crowd of vacationers who appreciate its airy spaciousness and lack of formality. Guest rooms are sparsely decorated, with masonry floors and much-used furniture, some in a darkly stained Iberian style. Nonetheless, bedrooms are quite comfortable, and they have tiled bathrooms.

Playa de Poniente (La Cala), 03502 Benidorm. www.granhoteldelfin.com. ✆ **96-585-34-00.** Fax 96-585-71-54. 92 units. 68€–161€ double. Rates include breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; 1 outdoor tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel RH Canfali A seaside villa between Playa de Levante and Playa de Poniente, the Canfali is one of the best small hotels in town. Originally built in 1950, it was enlarged in 1992. Its location is a scene stealer—on a low cliff at the end of the esplanade, with a staircase winding down to the beach. The best rooms have balconies with sea views. Although the hotel is spacious and comfortable, its decor is undistinguished and its guest rooms are merely functional. Terraces overlooking the sea are perfect spots for morning coffee.

Plaza de San Jaime 5, 03501 Benidorm. www.hotelesrh.com. ☎ **96-585-08-18.** Fax 96-585-00-66. 38 units. 43€–115€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Meliá Benidorm ★★ The resort's only luxe hotel, this member of a first-rate Spanish chain dominates the lodging scene—and it's rather mammoth in size. Located only 500m (1,640 ft.) from the Playa de Levante, it is surrounded by a large, well-landscaped park. All guest rooms are midsize to large, each comfortably and tastefully furnished. Both the regular and junior suites occupying the top floors of the building's two towers come with circular bathtub and hydromassage shower. The hotel also offers two of the best dining facilities in town, using market-fresh and first-rate ingredients, with a special emphasis on lavish buffet spreads.

Av. Severo Ochoa 1, 03500 Benidorm. www.melia-benidorm.com. ☎ **96-681-37-10.** Fax 96-680-21-69. 526 units. 92€–140€ double; 123€–190€ junior suite; 172€–320€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; bikes; children's center; exercise room; 2 heated freshwater pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

ALICANTE ★

81km (50 miles) N of Murcia, 40km (25 miles) S of Benidorm, 172km (107 miles) S of Valencia, 417km (259 miles) SE of Madrid

Alicante (Alacant), capital of the Costa Blanca, is popular in both summer and winter. Many Brits and northern Europeans consider it the best all-around city in Spain, although few Americans visit. As you amble about its esplanades, you almost feel as if you are in Africa: Women in caftans and peddlers hawking carvings from Senegal or elsewhere often populate the waterfront.

San Juan, the largest beach in Alicante, is a short distance from the capital. It's lined with villas, hotels, and restaurants. The bay of Alicante has two capes, and on the bay is **Postiguet Beach.** The bay stretches all the way to the **Cape of Santa Pola,** a town with two good beaches, a 14th-century castle, and several seafood restaurants.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Alicante's **Internacional El Altet Airport** (www.aena.es; ☎ **96-691-90-00**) is 19km (12 miles) from the city. There are as many as 11 daily flights from Madrid, about three flights per week from Sevilla, and three flights per week from Barcelona. Fifteen buses daily connect the city to the airport; the fare is 3.50€. The **Iberia Airlines** ticket office (www.iberia.com; ☎ **90-240-05-00**) is at the airport.

Twelve **trains** a day make the 2-hour trip from Valencia. Eight trains a day come from Barcelona (trip time: 5–5½ hr.), and 7 to 12 a day from Madrid (trip time: 3¼ hr.). The RENFE office is at **Estación Alicante,** Avenida Salamanca (www.renfe.es; ☎ **90-232-03-20**).

Different **bus** lines from various parts of the coast converge at the terminus, Calle Portugal 17 (☎ **96-513-07-00**). There is almost hourly service from Benidorm (see above) and from Valencia (trip time: 4 hr.). Buses also run from Madrid, a 5- to 6-hour trip.

To drive here, take the E-15 expressway south along the coast from Valencia. The expressway and N-340 run northeast from Murcia.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Rambla de Mendez Núñez (www.alicanteturismo.com; ✆ **96-520-00-00**). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 8pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

FAST FACTS For medical assistance, go to the **Hospital General,** Calle Maestro Alonso 109 (✆ **96-593-83-00**). In an emergency, dial ✆ **112;** to reach the city police, call ✆ **96-514-95-00.**

Exploring Alicante

With its wide, palm-lined avenues, this town was made for walking—and that's just what you'll do! The magnificent **Esplanada d'Espanya** ★, extending around part of the yacht harbor under a parade palm trees, includes a promenade of mosaic sidewalks whose wave patterns are so realistic that some visitors have been known to experience motion sickness. All the boulevards are clean and lined with unlimited shopping options. At Alicante's leading department store, El Corte Inglés, you can shop without contending with the crowds you might encounter in Madrid. Alicante is known for its parks, gardens, and lines of palm trees, and it boasts several old plazas, some paved with marble.

High on a hill, the stately if decrepit **Castell de Santa Bárbera** (✆ **96-526-31-31**) towers over the bay and provincial capital. The Greeks called the fort Akra Leuka (White Peak). Its original defenses, erected by the Carthaginians in 400 B.C., were later used by the Romans and the Arabs. The fortress's grand scale is evident in its moats, drawbridges, tunneled entrances, guardrooms, cisterns, underground storerooms, hospitals, batteries, powder stores, barracks, high breastworks, and deep dungeons, as well as Matanza Tower and the Keep. From the top of the castle is a panoramic view over land and sea. The castle is accessible by road or by elevator. Board the elevator at the Explanada d'Espanya; admission by elevator is 3€. In summer the castle is open daily from 10am to 8pm; in winter, hours are daily from 9am to 7pm. It is also possible to drive to the

EXPLANADA
DE ESPAÑA
ESPLANADA
D'ESPANYA

The Esplanada d'Espanya promenade.

The Castell de Santa Bárbera.

top. A paved road off Avenida Vásquez de Mella leads directly to a parking lot beside the castle. If you drive, admission is free.

On the slopes of Castillo de Santa Bárbara behind the cathedral is the **Barrio de Santa Cruz ★**. Forming part of the **Villa Vieja (Old Quarter),** it is a colorful section with wrought-iron window grilles, flowers, and a view of the entire harbor.

Alicante isn't all ancient. Facing Iglesia Santa María is the **Museu de Arte del Siglo XX Asegurada ★**, Plaza de Santa María 3 (www.maca-alicante.es; ✆ **96-514-07-68**). Housed in the baroque Casa de la Asegurada, originally constructed in 1685 as a granary, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Alicante features works by Miró, Calder, Cocteau, Dalí, Giacometti, Gris, Picasso, and Tàpies. Other notable artists include Braque, Chagall, Kandinsky, Zadkine, and Chillida. You'll also see a musical score by Manuel de Falla. The museum was formed in 1977 with the donation of a private collection by the painter and sculptor Eusebio Sempere, whose works are on display along with Juana Frances, another local artist. It is open year-round Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and Sunday 10:30am to 2:30pm. From October to May, the Tuesday-through-Saturday evening hours are 5 to 9pm. Admission is free.

Where to Eat

Alicanteros eat rice in almost every imaginable way. The most typical sauce is aioli, a kind of mayonnaise made from oil, egg yolks, and garlic. Dessert selections are the most varied on the Costa Blanca; *turrón de Alicante* (Spanish nougat) is the most popular.

Dársena Restaurante VALENCIAN This waterfront restaurant is famous for its menu offering a staggering 140 different paellas. Everything you thought didn't go into paella goes into the different versions here, even cauliflower, chicken livers, and lamb kidneys. You can opt for one of the more conventional paellas, which include succulent morsels like shellfish; in fact, you can work up a big appetite just reading the long menu. Start by ordering an appetizer: *fritura de la Bahía,* a crisp, fried local fish (similar to red mullet), or *boquerónes* (fresh anchovies). Try the velvety smooth crab soup flavored with Armagnac, or a refreshing tart composed of tuna and fresh spinach. One of the more memorable paellas is *arroz con bacalao y costar de ajo,* which is made with salt cod, thinly sliced garlic, and potatoes, the medley crowned by a light, airy egg crust.

Marina Deportiva, Muelle de Levante 6. www.darsena.com. ☎ **96-520-75-89.** Reservations required at lunch. Main courses 12€–32€; fixed-price menu from 22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4:30pm and Mon–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Bus: 22.

Nou Manolín ★★ TAPAS/VALENCIAN One of the most famous tapas bars in Spain, Nou Manolín offers as many as 50 different classical tapas—everything from shrimp in garlic sauce to batter-fried fresh anchovies. When he established it in 1972, the founder of this restaurant named it after an almost-forgotten neighborhood bar (El Manolín), which his grandfather had maintained before the Spanish Civil War. Nou Manolín's street level contains a busy bar area, but diners usually gravitate to the upstairs dining room, where tiled walls and uniformed waiters contribute to the ambience of an elegant *tasca.* Menu items focus mainly on paellas, but include many kinds of fish cooked in a salt crust, several kinds of stew, fresh shellfish, and a wide selection of Iberian wines. An unusual rice dish is *arroz con kokotxas,* a gelatinous Basque dish made with fresh cod "cheeks"—that is, the arrowhead-shaped flesh of the lower jaw. Rice dishes are studded with such fresh vegetables as sweet red peppers, artichokes, cauliflower, and green beans.

Calle Villegas 3. www.noumanolin.com. ☎ **96-520-03-68.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:15–4pm and 8:15pm–1:15am. Bus: 22.

Restaurante Jumillano SPANISH A humble wine bar when it opened in 1936 near the Old Quarter, this place has changed little over the years—except that the food is better than ever. Today the original owner's sons offer a cornucopia of succulent dishes, often featuring fresh fish laid out in the dining room on the sun-bleached planks of an antique fishing boat. Many menu items are derived from locally inspired recipes. The specialties include a "festival of canapés"; slices of cured ham served with fresh melon; shellfish soup with mussels; Alicante stew; pigs' trotters; a savory filet of beef seasoned with garlic; and a full gamut of grilled hake, sea bass, and shellfish.

César Elhuezabal 64. www.restaurantejumillano.com. ☎ **96-521-29-64.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Sun noon–4pm. Closed Sun July–Sept. Bus: D or F.

Restaurante La Ereta ★ VALENCIAN La Ereta not only enjoys the most scenic and tranquil location in Alicante, right next to the castle in the Parque de la Ereta, but it also serves some of the best cuisine, with lots of Valencian specialties, including rice dishes. While you're gazing out at the sea, you can enjoy both traditional cookery and a creative cuisine served by a formally attired staff. Instead of the usual tomato-based Andalucían gazpacho, you get a version with avocados. In elegant though minimalist surroundings, you can feast on main dishes that include paella or cod with cuttlefish. Chef Daniel Frias prepares tasting menus that are the best in Alicante province, and he is known for his deft handling of seafood and his market-fresh ingredients.

Parque de la Ereta. www.laereta.es. ☎ **96-514-32-50.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–26€; tasting menus 48€–62€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 2–3:30pm and 9–11pm. Closed Jan 10–31. Bus: 22.

Restaurante Monastrell ★★★ VALENCIAN Among chefs, María José San Román may be the greatest living authority on the subject of saffron. Trained in the kitchens of Cellar de Can Roca in Girona and Martín Berasategui and Juan Marí Arzak in San Sebastián, San Román uses Alicante-grown saffron in nearly half the dishes at Monastrell—ranging from a pumpkin lasagna starter (which also has a sage "air") to her signature paellas to the saffron gnocchi she serves in tomato sauce with sauteed monkfish. She is also an expert on the different olive oils of Spain, using nearly a dozen oils in her own kitchen. An arbequina olive oil from Córdoba even finds its way into a lemon sponge dessert as an olive oil sorbet.

Rafael Altamira 7. www.monastrell.com. ✆ **96-520-03-63.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–25€; daily 5-course menu 38€, personalized 6-course tasting menu 65€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:15–4pm and 8:15pm–midnight. Bus: 22.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Alicante is a great city of socializing. One of the town's densest concentrations of watering holes lies adjacent to the port. Night owls wander from one bar to the next along the length of **Muelle del Puerto** (a stretch of pavement also known as the Explanada d'Espanya). There are at least 20 spots that rock through the night. Also consider the bar at restaurant **Dársena** (see above).

Alternatively, walk through the narrow streets of Alicante's **Villa Vieja.** Streets particularly rich in bodegas and *tavernas* include **Calle Laboradores, Calle Cien Fuegos,** and **Plaza Santísima Faz.** Wander freely through this district, popping in and out wherever you feel most comfortable.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

Hotel Spa Porta Maris & Suites del Mar ★★ These sister properties share a roof, a reception area, and a cafeteria on the pier next to the cruise port walkway, a 5-minute stroll from the Old Quarter. Porta Maris rooms and suites are a bargain for the space, comfort, and views. Guests who step up to Suites del Mar also enjoy the property's exclusive lounge, cafe, pool, and spa. The finest luxury accommodations in Alicante, the complex was built between 2002 and 2007. The **Spa Wellness Centre** is rated as one of the best in eastern Spain. Guests also receive free admission and drink at the adjacent casino.

Plaza Puerta del Mar 3, 03002 Alicante. www.hotelspaportamaris.com. ✆ **96-514-70-21** (Porta Maris) or ✆ **96-514-70-22** (Suites del Mar). 132 units in hotel; 47 units in Suites del Mar. 80€–145€ double room; hotel suites 116€–185€; Suites del Mar 150€–250€. All rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; children's programs; exercise room; health club; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Meliá Alicante ★ ☺ Built in 1973 on a spit of landfill jutting into the Mediterranean, this massive beachfront hotel almost dwarfs every other establishment in town. Midsize guest rooms are painted in sunny colors and have balconies, usually with sweeping panoramas of sailboats in the nearby marina or over the beach. The public rooms are contemporary, with lots of marble. The hotel is midway between the main harbor and the very popular El Postiguet beach. Its most spectacular feature is its **restaurant** on the 26th floor, which has Alicante's most panoramic views of city and sea.

Plaza del Puerto 3, 03001 Alicante. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **800/336-3542** in the U.S., or 96-520-50-00. Fax 96-514-26-33. 545 units. 99€–184€ double; 217€–260€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking

20€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; children's programs; exercise room; health club; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor, 1 outdoor); room service; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MODERATE

Abba Centrum Alicante This eight-floor modern hotel is one of the most centrally located in Alicante, 320m (1,050 ft.) from the harbor but convenient to both the rail and the bus depots. The contemporary guest rooms are midsize for the most part and attractively decorated and furnished. The hotel is popular with small conferences, so it has a very good business center. Offering just a hint of North Africa, its exercise area also includes a traditional Arabic *hamman.*

Calle Pinto Lorenzo Casanova 33, 03003 Alicante. www.abbacentrumalicante.com. ☎ **96-513-04-40.** Fax 96-592-83-23. 150 units. 45€–100€ double; 90€–210€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; exercise room (w/*hamman*); room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (5€ per 45 min.). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel Leuka 🏷 The Leuka is best booked for the weekend, when it offers good value and is free of packs of businesspeople. Although it's about a 15-minute walk from the sea, it is close to the train station and two of the city's main thoroughfares. Guests have easy access to almost all destinations by bus. The 10-story building has an anonymous 1970s facade, but all the rooms have good-size balconies, and units above the third floor offer wonderful views of the castle. The decor is simple, but rooms are spacious and reasonably comfortable.

Calle Segura 23, 03004 Alicante. www.hotelleuka.com. ☎ **96-520-27-44.** Fax 96-514-12-22. 106 units. 60€–65€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. Bus: 22. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Les Monges Palace 🏷 A building dating from 1912 and a hotel since 1989, the "palace" has been restored and turned into a good stopover in the oldest and most historic district of the inner city. A family-run B&B-type hotel, it offers small but comfortable guest rooms. Each room is equipped with traditional, old-style furnishings, which sets the hotel apart from more modern choices in the area. The suite is special in that its furnishings are Japanese, and its bathroom offers both a private Jacuzzi and a sauna.

Calle San Agustín 4, 03002 Alicante. www.lesmonges.es. ☎ **96-521-50-46.** Fax 96-514-71-89. 23 units. 45€–65€ double; 100€ suite. DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 22. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (7€ per 24 hr.).

Pensión Portugal The two-story Portugal is 1 block from the bus station, about 4 blocks from the train station, and a 3-minute walk from the harbor. The small rooms, furnished in tasteful modern style, are immaculate but basic. Some face an interior courtyard; those opening onto the outside have a small private terrace and lots of sunlight. Guests in units with private bathrooms and showers will find their rooms a bit cramped but serviceable. For those who share, the corridor bathrooms are adequate.

Calle Portugal 26, 03003 Alicante. www.pensionportugal.es. ☎ **96-592-92-44.** 20 units, 8 with private bathroom. 36€–40€ double with shared bathroom; 42€–46€ double with private bathroom. No credit cards. No parking. Bus: 22. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, no phone.

Where to Stay Near Alicante

Hotel Ferrero ★★ This romantic villa outside Alicante has been restored and turned into a boutique hotel of considerable charm and grace. Though it has only a dozen rooms, it offers some of the facilities of a deluxe hotel, including a swimming pool and spa. Top tennis star Juan Carlos Ferrero of Spain restored the 19th-century house to its former glory at a total investment of $12 million. The hotel, 58km (36 miles) north of Alicante, lies behind a periwinkle exterior, with a light-drenched modern interior containing luxuriously furnished bedrooms.

Carretera Ontinyent-Villena, Km 16, Boicairent 46880 Valencia. www.hotelferrero.com. ☎ **96-235-51-75.** 12 units. 195€–290€ double; 290€–340€ junior suite; 340€–990€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service; spa; 2 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

ELCHE

21km (13 miles) SW of Alicante, 56km (35 miles) NE of Murcia, 406km (252 miles) SE of Madrid

Sandwiched between Alicante and Murcia, the little town of Elche (Elx) is famous for its age-old mystery play, lush groves of date palms, and shoe and sandal making.

On August 14 and 15 for the past 6 centuries, the **Misteri d'Elx (Mystery of Elche)** has celebrated the Assumption of the Virgin. It is reputedly the oldest dramatic liturgy in Europe. Songs are performed in an ancient form of Catalán. Admission is free, but it's hard to get a seat unless you book in advance through the tourist office (see "Essentials," below). The play takes place at the Church of Santa María, which dates from the 17th century.

Unless you visit at the time of the mystery play, the town's **Palm Grove ★★** holds the most appeal. The 600,000-tree palm forest is unrivaled in Europe. It's said that Phoenician (or perhaps Greek) seafarers originally planted the trees. A thousand years ago, the Moors created the irrigation system that still maintains the palms. Stroll through the **Huerto del Cura (Priest's Grove) ★★**, open daily from 9am to 6pm, to see the palm garden and collection of tropical flowers and cactuses. In the garden, look for the **Palmera del Cura (Priest's Palm)** from the 1840s, with seven branches sprouting from its trunk. In the grove you will see one of the most famous ladies of Spain, *La Dama de Elche*. This

The 600,000-tree Palm Grove.

is a replica—the original 500 B.C. limestone bust, made by the Iberians and discovered in 1897, is on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid.

The industrial park on the edge of town is home to factory outlet stores of two dozen Spanish makers of clothing and—most notably—shoes. Marked down discontinued styles or sample sizes can save you up to half from retail. The best shop of the group is **Pikolinos Tienda Museo ★**, at Calle Germán Bernacer 4 (www.pikolinos.com; ✆ **96-568-14-88**). Ask at the tourist information office for directions and a list of factory outlets.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The central train station is Estación Parque, Avenida del Ferrocarril. **Trains** arrive almost hourly from Alicante. Visit www.renfe.es, or call ✆ **90-232-03-20,** for schedules.

The bus station (✆ **96-661-50-50**) is at Avenida de la Libertat. **Buses** travel between Alicante and Elche on the hour.

Take the N-340 highway from Alicante and proceed southwest if you're driving.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Parque Municipal s/n, 3203 Elche, Alicante (www.turismedelx.com; ✆ **96-665-81-95**). It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm, Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Hotel Huerto del Cura ★★ 🎁 Staying here is a unique experience. Huerto del Cura is in the Priest's Grove, so you'll have panoramic views of the palm trees from your room. The privately owned *parador* consists of a number of immaculately kept duplex and triplex bungalows in the grove. Each is well furnished and roomy, with efficiently organized, tiled bathrooms. Service is impeccable.

Porta de La Morera 14, 03203 Elche. www.hotelhuertodelcura.com. ✆ **96-661-00-11.** Fax 96-661-20-60. 82 units. 60€–140€ double; 110€–164€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parque Municipal INTERNATIONAL A large open-air restaurant and cafe in the middle of a public park, Parque Municipal is a good place to go for decent food and relaxed service. Many regional dishes appear on the menu; try one of the savory rice dishes as a main course, followed by "cake of Elche." Two specialties are paella and Mediterranean sea bass, sailor's style (prepared as a stew).

Paseo La Estación s/n. ✆ **96-545-34-15.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–21€; fixed-price menus 14€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 9am–11pm.

Restaurante La Finca ★ MEDITERRANEAN This restaurant lies 2km (1¼ miles) south of town along the Carretera de El Alted, in the countryside near the Elche *fútbol* (soccer) stadium. La Finca opened in 1984, and its good food has attracted customers ever since. The menu changes frequently, based on the season and what's fresh. Both fish and meat are prepared in creative ways, although time-tested recipes are used as well. Try tuna-stuffed peppers or veal kidneys with potatoes. Chocolate mousse is usually available for dessert.

Partida de Perleta, Poligono 1, no. 7. www.lafinca.es. ✆ **96-545-60-07.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–24€; fixed-price menus 54€–60€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–12:30am; Sun 1–4pm. Closed 2 weeks in Jan, 1 week at Easter, and 1 week in Oct.

11

BARCELONA

BARCELONA

Blessed with rich and fertile soil, an excellent harbor, and a hardworking population, Barcelona has always prospered. When Madrid was still a dusty fortress village on the Manzanares, Barcelona was already a powerful, diverse capital, influenced by the Mediterranean empires that conquered it. Carthage, Rome, and Charlemagne-era France overran Catalunya, and each left an indelible mark on the region's identity.

The Catalán people have clung fiercely to their unique culture and language, both of which Franco systematically tried to eradicate. But Catalunya has endured, becoming a semiautonomous region of Spain (with Catalán its official language). And Barcelona, the region's economic, political, and intellectual capital, has truly come into its own. The city's most powerful monuments open a window onto its history: the intricately carved edifices of the medieval Gothic Quarter; the curvilinear *modernisme* (Catalán Art Nouveau) architecture that blossomed alongside Gaudí's Gothic reinterpretation expressed in Sagrada Família; and the seminal works of Picasso and Miró, in museums that mark Barcelona as a crucial incubator for 20th-century art. Parks, restaurants, nightlife (Barcelona is a *big* bar town), and shopping possibilities, plus nearby wineries, ensure that you'll be entertained round the clock. Barcelona is set for serious sightseeing; you'll need plenty of time to take it all in—as much time as it takes to see Madrid, if not more.

THE best BARCELONA EXPERIENCES

- **Watching a vision in stone take shape:** Every day masons and other workmen get one step closer to completing the greatest of all the modernisme buildings, Antoni Gaudí's La Sagrada Familia. The symbol of the city, the church represents the apotheosis of Gaudí's style.
- **Strolling Les Rambles:** One of the greatest walking streets in the world, Les Rambles stretches from Barcelona's gritty waterfront into the most bourgeois corner of the city. The Fellini-esque journey is populated with street performers, caged birds, pastry shops, ice-cream vendors, and representatives of every slice of humankind.
- **Watching a wedding party outside Santa María del Mar:** The beautiful Gothic church frequently hosts weddings, and the best place to observe the participants—always dressed to the nines—is from the outdoor tables of the wine bar La Vinya del Senyor.
- **Interacting with Miró sculptures on the roof of his museum:** Picasso might have become more famous, but Joan Miró remained faithful to Catalunya. The rooftop of the Fundació Joan Miró on Montjuïc features some of his whimsical sculptures—not to mention great views of the city.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Palau de la Música Catalana.**

- **Eating pa amb tomàquet in a stall in La Boquería:** The quintessential Catalán tapa of bread rubbed with fresh tomato tastes even better when devoured amid the heaps of produce, cases of meat, and ice beds of fish in Barcelona's great food market.

CATALÁN CULTURE

Barcelona has always thrived on contact and commerce with countries beyond Spain's borders. From the 9th century, when Barcelona was a client state of the French crown, to the modern era, the city has been linked more closely to France and the rest of Europe than to Iberia. Each of the military and financial empires that swept through Catalunya left its cultural imprint.

Language

Linguistically, **Catalán**—the language of the autonomous region of Catalunya—lies midway between French and Castilian Spanish. Modern linguists attribute the earliest division of Catalán from Castilian to two phenomena. The first was the cultural links and trade ties between ancient Barcina and the neighboring Roman colony of Provence, which shaped the Catalán tongue along Provençal and Languedocian models. The second major event was the invasion of the eastern Pyrenees by Charlemagne's son in 801, and the designation of Catalunya as one of the Spanish Marches (political buffer zones) between Christian Europe and Moorish-dominated Iberia.

Although Catalán is closely related to Castilian Spanish, even travelers who are fluent in Spanish are occasionally confronted with unfamiliar words in Barcelona. Don't be surprised if maps or brochures have addresses in Spanish, but street signs are in Catalán. Today, Catalán is the most widely spoken non-national language in Europe. Most Barcelonans speak both Catalán and Castilian Spanish, and many speak English as well as French.

Architecture

Like many other cities in Spain, Barcelona claims its share of Neolithic dolmens and ruins from the Roman and Moorish periods. Monuments survive from the Middle Ages, when the Romanesque solidity of no-nonsense barrel vaults, narrow windows, and fortified design were widely used.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, religious fervor swept through Europe, and pilgrims began to flock to northern Spain, including Barcelona, on their way west to Santiago de Compostela, bringing with them French building styles and the need for new and larger churches. The style that emerged, called Catalán Gothic, had softer lines and more elaborate ornamentation than traditional Gothic. Strongly influenced by religious orders based in Burgundy, it used ogival (pointed) arches, intricate stone carvings, large interior columns, exterior buttresses, and vast rose windows set with colored glass. One of Barcelona's purest and most-loved examples of this style is church of **Santa María del Mar,** north of the city's harbor.

The Barcelona best remembered by visitors, however, is the Barcelona of *modernisme,* an Art Nouveau movement that lasted from about 1890 to 1910 and put the city on the architectural map. It blends pre-Raphaelite voluptuousness with Catalán romanticism, lacing them heavily with curved lines and organic forms easily recognized in nature.

A detail of Gaudí's Sagrada Família.

The movement's most famous architect was Antoni Gaudí. The chimneys of his buildings look like half-melted mounds of chocolate twisted into erratic spirals; his horizontal lines flow over vertical supports. Some of Gaudí's most distinctive creations include Casa Milà, Casa Batlló, Park Güell, and the landmark **Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família** (uncompleted at his death; p. 450).

While Gaudí was strongly influenced, especially in Sagrada Família, by the soaring French Gothic style otherwise only seen in León, other modernist architects of this era looked for inspiration in more colloquial medieval models that combined the solidity of Carthusian monastic architecture with the structural innovations of indigenous Catalán design. Examples include Domènech i Montaner and Puig i Cadafalch, whose elegant mansions and concert halls seemed perfectly suited to the enlightened prosperity of the 19th-century Catalán bourgeoisie. A 19th-century economic boom neatly coincided with the profusion of geniuses who suddenly emerged in the building business. Entrepreneurs who had made their fortunes in the fields and mines of the New World commissioned beautiful and elaborate villas in Barcelona and nearby Sitges.

Initiated in 1858, the expansion of Barcelona into the northern **l'Eixample district** laid the groundwork for the *modernisme* architects' designs. The street grid in l'Eixample was intersected by broad diagonals. Although opposed by local

L'Eixample.

landowners and never endowed with the detail of the original design, it provided a carefully planned, elegant path in which a growing city could showcase its finest buildings.

Consistent with the general artistic stagnation in Spain during the Franco era (1939–75), the 1950s saw a tremendous increase in the number of anonymous housing projects around the periphery of Barcelona. Since the death of Franco, a cultural renaissance has ensued: New and more creative designs for buildings are again being executed.

Art

From the cave paintings discovered at Lérida to several true giants of the 20th century—Picasso, Dalí, and Miró—Catalunya has had a long and significant artistic tradition. It is the Spanish center of the plastic arts.

The first art movement to attract attention in Barcelona was **Catalán Gothic sculpture,** which held sway from the 13th to the 15th centuries and produced such renowned masters as Bartomeu and Pere Johan. Sculptors working with Italian masters brought the Renaissance to Barcelona, but few great Catalán works remain from this period. The rise of baroque art in the 17th and 18th centuries saw Catalunya filled with several impressive examples, but nothing worth a special pilgrimage.

In the neoclassical period of the 18th century, Catalunya, and particularly Barcelona, awoke from an artistic slumber. Art schools opened and foreign painters arrived, exerting considerable influence. The 19th century produced many Catalán artists who followed the general European trends of the time without forging any major creative breakthroughs.

The 20th century brought renewed artistic ferment in Barcelona, as reflected by the arrival of Málaga-born **Pablo Picasso.** (The Catalán capital today is the site of a major Picasso museum.) The great surrealist painters of the Spanish school, **Joan Miró** (who also has a museum in Barcelona) and **Salvador Dalí** (whose fantastical museum is along the Costa Brava, north of Barcelona [p. 528]), also came to the Catalán capital.

Today, many Barcelona artists are making major names for themselves, and their works are sold in the most prestigious galleries of the Western world. Outstanding among these is sculptor Susana Solano, who ranks among the most renowned names in Spanish contemporary art.

ESSENTIALS

Arriving

BY PLANE Most travelers to Barcelona fly to Madrid and change planes there, although there are direct flights to Barcelona on American Airlines. **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642**) offers many daily shuttle flights between Barcelona and Madrid—at 15-minute intervals during peak hours on weekdays—plus service from Valencia and Granada. Generally cheaper than Iberia, **Air Europa** (www.air-europa.com; ✆ **90-240-15-01**) runs shuttles between Madrid and Barcelona. Shuttle schedules depend on demand, with more frequent service in the early morning and late afternoon. **Vueling** (www.vueling.com; ✆ **93-151-81-58** from outside Spain, or 80-700-17-17 from within Spain) offers several daily flights from Sevilla and Bilbao to Barcelona. For more information on flying into Madrid, refer to "Getting There," p. 747.

American Airlines (www.aa.com; ✆ **800/433-7300**) has nonstop daily flights between New York's Kennedy Airport and Barcelona, but they generally operate only spring through midfall. The flight leaves JFK at 5:15pm and arrives in Barcelona the following day, at 7:10am. A flight departs Barcelona daily at 9:20am, arriving in New York at 1:25pm.

The Barcelona airport, **El Prat de Llobregat,** 08820 Prat de Llobregat (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**), is 12km (7½ miles) southwest of the city.

In 2009, Barcelona opened **Terminal T1,** a $1.7-billion structure shaped like an aluminum sword. The terminal can greet as many as 30 million passengers annually, doubling the airport's previous capacity. It's eco-friendly, with solar-powered water heaters and other features, and it also has a spa, fitness center, hairdresser, and even beds for rent, plus some 80 shops and restaurants.

The route to the center of town is carefully signposted. A train runs between the airport and Barcelona's Estació Central de Barcelona-Sants every day from 5:40am (the first airport departure) to 11:10pm (from Sants) or 11:40pm (the last city departure). The 20-minute trip costs 3.65€. If your hotel is near Plaça de España, you might opt for an **Aerobús** (www.aerobusbcn.com; ✆ **93-415-60-20**). It runs daily every 10 minutes between 6:10am and 1am from the airport, and till 12:30am from the Plaça de Catalunya. The fare is 5.05€ single trip, 8.75€ round-trip. A taxi from the airport into central Barcelona costs 20€ to 27€.

BY TRAIN A train with sleeper cars called the **Trenhotel** provides rail service between Paris and Barcelona in 12 hours. For many other routes from the rest of Europe, you change trains at Port Bou, on the France-Spain border. Most trains issue seat and sleeper reservations. Trains arrive at the **Estació de França,** Avenida Marqués de L'Argentera (Metro: Barceloneta, L3), from points throughout Spain as well as from international cities. High-speed trains now link Madrid with Barcelona, with some 25 daily connections leaving from both Madrid and Barcelona. The fast nonstop services between Spain's two leading cities take 2 hours and 38 minutes, with those stopping en route taking 45 minutes longer. The trains are spacious and comfortable; even seats in tourist class recline. Small TV screens and radio channels are provided at every seat. From Sevilla one train makes the 12½-hour trip to Barcelona. There are also 2 AVE trains per day from Sevilla to Barcelona, taking 5½ hours.

The modernized 1929 station has a huge screen with updated information on train departures and arrivals, personalized ticket dispatching, a passenger-attention center, a tourism information center, internal baggage control, a first-aid center, and centers for hotel reservations and car rentals. It is much more than a departure point: The station also has an elegant restaurant, a cafeteria, a book-and-record store, and a jazz club. Estació de França is steps from Ciutadella Park, the zoo, and the port, and is near Vila Olímpica. RENFE also has a terminal at **Estació Central de Barcelona-Sants,** Plaça de Països Catalánes (Metro: Sants-Estació). For general RENFE information, log on to www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20**.

The Barcelona Card

An ideal way to appreciate Barcelona better and save money at the same time is with the Barcelona Card. It could be a bargain if you stay in the city for more than an afternoon and do much sightseeing. For adults, it costs 29€ for 2 days, 35€ for 3 days, 40€ for 4 days, and 47€ for 5 days. For children ages 4 to 12, the card costs 25€ for 2 days, 30€ for 3 days, 32€ for 4 days, and 37€ for 5 days. Coverage is by calendar day, not 24-hour period.

The card covers the Metro or bus, and unlimited travel on all public transport. Culture vultures who hold the card can get discounts of 10% to 100% in 29 museums. Eleven theaters and shows grant a 10% to 25% discount, which also applies at 15 leisure and night venues. You also get a 12% discount at 23 leading stores. Finally, there is a 10% discount in 15 restaurants. The cards specify where they can be used. They're for sale at the tourist offices at the airport, at Sants station, and in the Plaça de Catalunya. (See "Visitor Information," below, or go to **www.barcelonaturisme.com**.)

BY BUS Bus travel to Barcelona is possible, but not popular—it's pretty slow. Barcelona's Estació del Nord is the arrival and departure point for **Alsa** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**) buses to and from southern France and Italy. Alsa also operates 27 buses per day to and from Madrid (trip time: 8½ hr.). A one-way ticket from Madrid costs 28€ to 61€.

Linebús (www.linebus.com; ✆ **90-233-55-33**) offers six trips a week to and from Paris. **Eurolines Viagens,** Carrer Viriato (www.eurolines.es; ✆ **93-490-40-00**), operates seven buses a week to and from Frankfurt and another five per week to and from Marseille.

For bus travel to the beach resorts along the Costa Brava (p. 528), go to **Sarfa,** Estació del Nord (www.sarfa.es; ✆ **90-230-20-25**). Trip time is usually 1 hour and 20 minutes.

BY CAR From **France** (the usual European road approach to Barcelona), the major access route is at the eastern end of the **Pyrenees.** You have a choice of the express highway (E-15) or the more scenic coastal road. If you take the coastal road in July and August, you will often encounter bumper-to-bumper traffic. You can also approach Barcelona via **Toulouse.** Cross the border into Spain at **Puigcerdà** (where there are frontier stations), near the Principality of Andorra. From there, take the N-152 to Barcelona.

From **Madrid,** take the N-2 to Zaragoza, and then the A-2 to El Vendrell, followed by the A-7 freeway to Barcelona. From the **Costa Blanca** or **Costa del Sol,** follow the E-15 north from Valencia along the eastern Mediterranean coast.

BY FERRY **Trasmediterránea,** Muelle de Sant Bertran s/n (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **90-245-46-45**), operates daily trips to and from the Balearic Islands of Mallorca (trip time: 8 hr.) and Menorca (8 hr.). In summer, it's important to have a reservation as far in advance as possible.

Visitor Information

Barcelona has two types of tourist offices. The local government office deals with Spain in general and Catalunya in particular, with basic information about Barcelona. This organization has an office at the airport, **El Prat de Llobregat**

(Terminal A ✆ **93-478-47-04;** Terminal B ✆ 93-478-05-65), which you'll pass as you clear Customs. Hours are daily 9am to 9pm. There is another large office in the center of Barcelona at the **Palau de Rubert,** Passeig de Gràcia 107 (www.gencat.net; ✆ **93-238-80-91**), where there are often exhibitions. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm, Sunday and holidays 10am to 2:30pm.

The other organization, **Oficina de Informació de Turisme de Barcelona,** Plaça de Catalunya 17-S (www.barcelonaturisme.com; ✆ **93-285-38-34**), deals exclusively with the city of Barcelona. This is also where you can get detailed information about the city and the Barcelona Card for tourist discounts. The office is open daily 9am to 9pm. The same organization has an office at the **Estació Central de Barcelona-Sants** (Sants railway station), Plaça de Països Catalánes (✆ **93-285-38-34;** Metro: Sants-Estació). In summer, it is open daily from 8am to 8pm; off season, it is open Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday 8am to 2pm.

City Layout

MAIN SQUARES, STREETS & ARTERIES **Plaça de Catalunya** (**Plaza de Cataluña** in Castilian Spanish) is the city's heart; the world-famous **Les Rambles** (**Las Ramblas,** in Spanish) are its arteries. Les Rambles begin at the Plaça Portal de la Pau, with its 49m-high (161-ft.) monument to Columbus, and stretch north to the Plaça de Catalunya. Along this wide promenade you'll find bookshops and newsstands, stalls selling birds and flowers, and benches or cafe tables where you can sit and watch the passing parade.

West of Les Rambles is **Raval,** a sector of the Ciutat Vella (Old City) also sometimes known as **Barri Xinés** (**Barrio Chino** or **Chinese Quarter**). Once a haven of prostitution and drugs, it was spruced up by the city and is the principal immigrant quarter where many Eastern Europeans, Pakistanis, and Indonesians live.

Off Les Rambles lies **Plaça Reial (Plaza Real),** the most harmoniously proportioned square in Barcelona. Come here on Sunday morning to see the stamp and coin collectors peddle their wares.

The Plaça de Catalunya.

Waterfront dining in Barceloneta.

The major wide boulevards of Barcelona are the **Avinguda (Avenida) Diagonal** and **Passeig (Paseo) de Colom,** as well as the elegant shopping street, **Passeig de Gràcia.**

A short walk from Les Rambles brings you to the **Passeig del Moll de la Fusta,** a waterfront promenade developed in the 1990s. It's home to some of the best (but hardly cheapest) restaurants in Barcelona. If you can't afford the prices, come here at least for a drink in the open air and a view of the harbor.

To the east is the old port, **La Barceloneta,** which dates from the 18th century. This strip of land between the port and the sea has traditionally been a good place for seafood. **Barri Gòtic** (**Barrio Gótico** or **Gothic Quarter**) is east of Les Rambles. This is the site of the city's oldest buildings, including the cathedral.

North of Plaça de Catalunya, **l'Eixample** unfolds. An area of wide boulevards, it contains two major roads that lead out of Barcelona: Avinguda Diagonal and Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes. Another major neighborhood, working-class **Gràcia,** is north of l'Eixample.

Montjuïc, one of the city's mountains, begins at Plaça d'Espanya, a traffic rotary, beyond which are Barcelona's famous fountains. Montjuïc was the setting for the principal events of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games. The other mountain is **Tibidabo,** in the northwest, which boasts great views of the city and the Mediterranean. It has an amusement park.

FINDING AN ADDRESS/MAPS Finding a Barcelona address can be difficult. The city abounds with long boulevards and a complicated maze of narrow, twisting streets. Knowing the street number, if there is one, is essential. The designation s/n *(sin número)* means that the building has no number. It's crucial to learn the cross street if you're seeking a specific address.

The rule about street numbers is that there is no rule. On most streets, numbering begins on one side, runs up that side until the end, and then runs in the opposite direction on the other side. Number 40 might be opposite 408. But there are many exceptions. Sometimes street numbers on buildings in the older quarters have been obscured by the patina of time.

Arm yourself with a good map before setting out. Maps for exploring Barcelona are available at most bookstores and newsstands, such as those found along Les Rambles.

The Neighborhoods in Brief

BARRI GÒTIC This section rises to the north of Passeig de Colom, with its **Columbus Monument.** Its eastern border is a major artery, Vía Laietana, which begins at La Barceloneta at Plaça d'Antoni López and runs north to Plaça d'Urquinaona. Les Rambles form the western border of the Gothic Quarter, and on the northern edge is the Ronda de Sant Pere, which intersects with **Plaça de Catalunya** and the **Passeig de Gràcia.** The heart of this medieval quarter is the **Plaça de Sant Jaume,** which was a major crossroads in the old Roman city. Many of the structures in the old section are ancient, including the ruins of a Roman temple dedicated to Augustus. Antiques stores, restaurants, cafes, museums, some hotels, and bookstores fill the area today. It is also the headquarters of the **Generalitat,** seat of the Catalán government.

LES RAMBLES (LA RAMBLA) The most famous promenade in Spain, ranking with Madrid's Paseo del Prado, was once a drainage channel. These days, street entertainers, flower vendors, news dealers, cafe patrons, and strollers flow along the length of Les Rambles, also commonly known as **La Rambla** because it is one continuous street. The gradual 1.5km (1-mile) descent toward the sea has often been called a metaphor for life because its bustling action combines cosmopolitanism and crude vitality.

Les Rambles actually consists of five sections, each a particular *rambla*—Rambla de Canaletes, Rambla dels Estudis, Rambla de Sant Josep, Rambla dels Caputxins, and Rambla de Santa Mónica. The shaded pedestrian esplanade runs from the Plaça de Catalunya to the port—all the way to the Columbus Monument. Along the way you'll pass the **Gran Teatre del Liceu,** on Rambla dels Caputxins, one of the most magnificent opera houses in the world until it caught fire in 1994 and had to be rebuilt. Miró created a sidewalk mosaic at the Plaça de la Boqueria. During the Franco era, this street grew increasingly seedier, but the opening of the Ramada Renaissance hotel and the restoration of many buildings have brought energy and hope for the street.

EL RAVAL OR BARRI XINÉS Despite the old slang name for the neighborhood ("Chinese Quarter"), this isn't Chinatown—but it is the principal immigrant residential quarter in Barcelona's Ciutat Vella (Old City). Just off Les Rambles, El Raval lies between the waterfront and Carrer de l'Hospital. Although Raval has a long way to go, urban renewal has razed some of the seedier parts of the barrio. The opening of the **Museu d'Art Contemporani** at Plaça dels Angels has led to a revitalization of the area and the opening of a lot more art galleries.

BARRI DE LA RIBERA Another neighborhood that stagnated for years but is now well into a renaissance, the Barri de la Ribera is adjacent to the Barri Gòtic, going east to Passeig de Picasso, which borders the Parc de la Ciutadella. The centerpiece of this district is the **Museu Picasso,** housed in the 15th-century Palau Agüilar, Montcada 15. Numerous art galleries have opened around the museum, and the Old Quarter is fashionable. Many mansions in this area were built during one of Barcelona's major maritime expansions, principally in the 1200s and 1300s. Most of these grand homes still stand along **Carrer de Montcada** and other nearby streets.

LA BARCELONETA & THE HARBORFRONT Although Barcelona has a long seagoing tradition, its waterfront was in decay for years. Today, the waterfront promenade, **Passeig del Moll de la Fusta,** bursts with activity. The best way to get a bird's-eye view of the area is to take an elevator to the top of the Columbus Monument in Plaça Portal de la Pau.

Near the monument were the **Reials Drassanes,** or royal shipyards, a booming place during the Middle Ages. Years before Columbus landed in the New World, ships sailed around the world from here, flying the traditional yellow-and-red flag of Catalunya.

To the east is a mainly artificial peninsula, **La Barceloneta (Little Barcelona).** Formerly a fishing district dating primarily from the 18th century, it's now filled with seafood restaurants. The blocks here are long and surprisingly narrow—architects planned them that way so that each room in every building fronted a street. Many bus lines terminate at the Passeig Nacional, site of the **Barcelona Aquarium.**

L'EIXAMPLE To the north of the Plaça de Catalunya is l'Eixample, the section of Barcelona that grew beyond the old medieval walls. This great period of enlargement (*eixample* in Catalán) occurred mainly in the 19th century. Avenues form a grid of perpendicular streets, cut across by a majestic boulevard—**Passeig de Gràcia,** a posh shopping street ideal for leisurely promenades. The area's main traffic artery is **Avinguda Diagonal,** which links the expressway and the heart of the congested city.

L'Eixample was the center of Barcelona's *modernisme* movement, and it possesses some of the most original buildings any architect ever designed. Gaudí's Sagrada Família is one of the major attractions.

MONTJUÏC & TIBIDABO Montjuïc, called Hill of the Jews after a Jewish necropolis here, gained prominence in 1929 as the site of the World's Fair and again in 1992 as the site of the Summer Olympic Games. Its major attractions are the Joan Miró museum, the Olympic installations, and the **Poble Espanyol (Spanish Village),** a 2-hectare (5-acre) site constructed for the World's Fair. Examples of Spanish art and architecture are on display against the backdrop of a traditional Spanish village. Tibidabo (503m/1,650 ft.) is where you should go for your final look at Barcelona. On a clear day you can see the mountains of Mallorca, some 209km (130 miles) away. Reached by train, tram, and cable car, Tibidabo is the most popular Sunday excursion in Barcelona.

PEDRALBES Pedralbes is where wealthy Barcelonans live in stylish blocks of apartment houses, 19th-century villas behind ornamental fences, or stunning *modernisme* structures. Set in a park, the **Palau de Pedralbes,** Av. Diagonal 686, was constructed in the 1920s as a gift from the city to Alfonso XIII, the grandfather of King Juan Carlos. Today it has a new life, housing a museum of carriages and European paintings called the **Colecció Cambó.**

VILA OLÍMPICA This seafront property contains the tallest buildings in the city. The revitalized site, in the post–Olympic Games era, is the setting for many imported-car showrooms, designer clothing stores, restaurants, and business offices. The "village" is where the athletes lived during the 1992 games. A miniature city has taken shape, complete with banks, art galleries, nightclubs, bars, and even pastry shops.

GETTING AROUND

To save money on public transportation, buy a card that's good for 10 trips. **Tarjeta T-10,** for 9.25€, is good for the Metro and the bus. Passes (*abonos temporales*) are available at **Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona,** Plaça de la Universitat. It's open Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm (www.tmb.net; ✆ **93-138-70-74**).

The sightseeing **Bus Turistic** passes by 24 of the most popular sights. You can get on or off the bus as you please, and the price covers the Tibidabo funicular and the Montjuïc cable car and funicular. Tickets, which can be purchased on the bus or at the tourist office at Plaça de Catalunya, cost 24€ for 1 day, 31€ for 2 days; for children, it's 14€ for 1 day and 18€ for 2 days.

By Subway

Barcelona's Metro system consists of six main lines; it crisscrosses the city more frequently and with greater efficiency than the bus network. Two commuter trains run between the city and the suburbs. Service operates Sunday to Thursday from 5am to midnight, and Friday and Saturday from 5am to 2am. The one-way fare is 2€. Each Metro station entrance is marked with a red diamond. The major station for all subway lines is **Plaça de Catalunya.**

By Bus

Some 190 bus lines traverse the city and, not surprisingly, you don't want to ride them at rush hour. The driver issues a ticket as you board at the front. Most buses operate daily from 5:30am to 10pm; some night buses go along the principal arteries from 11pm to 4am. Buses are color coded—red ones cut through the city center during the day, and yellow ones operate at night. The one-way fare is 2€.

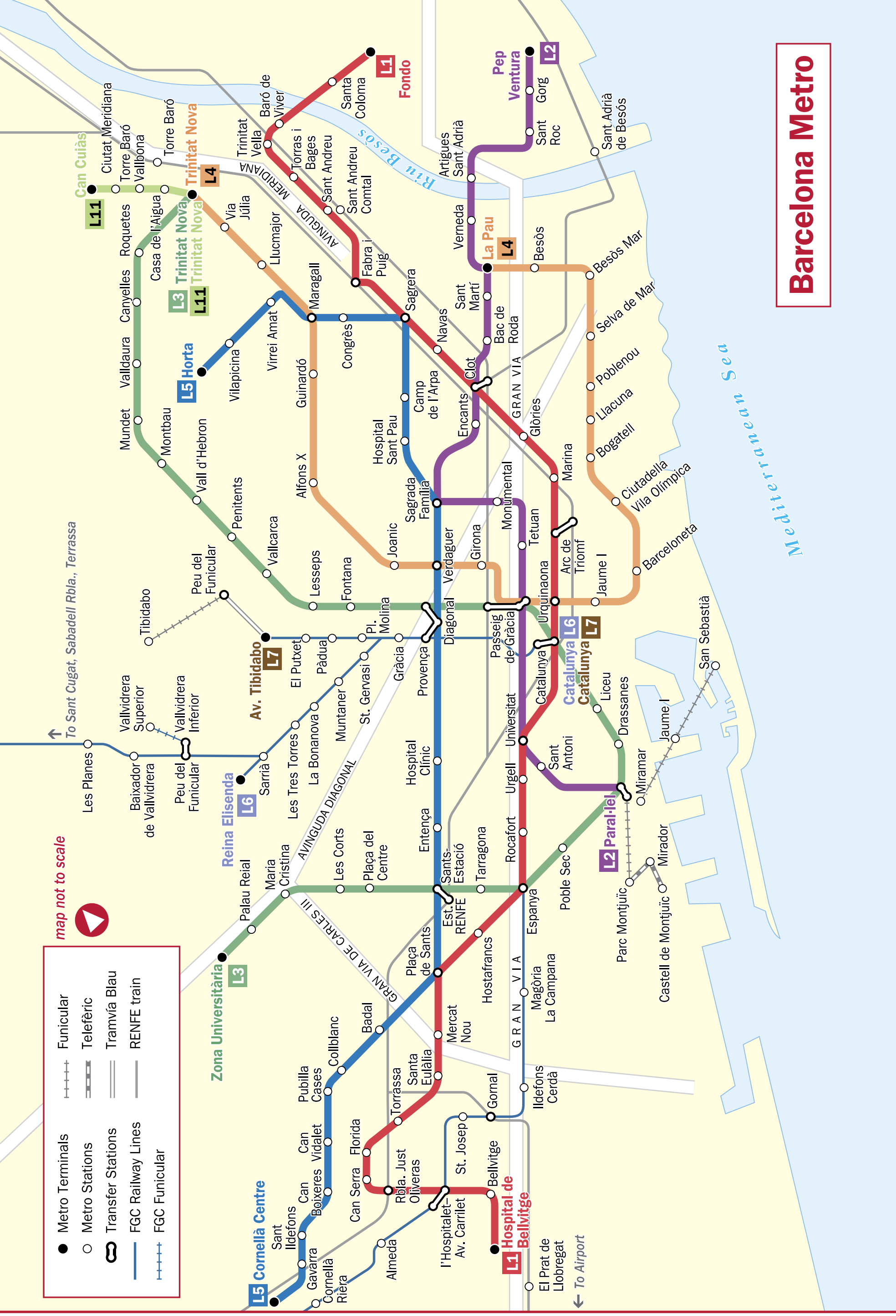
By Taxi

Each yellow-and-black taxi bears the letters sp (*Servicio Público*) on its front and rear. A lit green light on the roof and a libre sign in the window indicate the taxi is free to pick up passengers. The basic rate begins at 2€. Check to make sure you're not paying the fare of a previously departed passenger; taxi drivers have been known to "forget" to turn back the meter. Each additional kilometer in slow-moving traffic costs 1€. Supplements might apply—1€ for a large suitcase placed in the trunk, for instance. Rides to the airport sometimes carry a supplement of 3.10€. For a taxi, contact **Ràdio Taxi** (www.radiotaxi033.com; ✆ **93-303-30-33**).

By Car

Driving in congested Barcelona is frustrating and potentially dangerous. It's also unlikely you'd ever find a parking place. Try other means of getting around. Save car rentals for excursions and moving on.

All three of the major U.S.-based car-rental firms are represented in Barcelona, both at the airport and (except for Budget) downtown. **Avis,** Calle Corcega 293–295 (www.avis.es; ✆ **90-211-02-75**), is open Monday to Friday 8am to 9pm, Saturday 8am to 8pm, and Sunday 8am to 1pm. Remember that it's usually cheaper and easier to arrange your car rental before leaving the United States. For more information on car rentals in Spain, see "Getting Around," p. 750.



Barcelona Metro

map not to scale
Metro Terminals
Metro Stations
Transfer Stations
FGC Railway Lines
FGC Funicular
Funicular
Telefèric
Tramvia Blau
RENFE train
L1 Fondo
Santa Coloma
Baró de Viver
Trinitat Vella
Torras i Bages
Sant Andreu
Fabra i Puig
Sagrera
Navas
Clot
Glòries
Marina
Arc de Triomf
Urquinaona
Catalunya
Universitat
Urgell
Rocafort
Espanya
Hostafrancs
Plaça de Sants
Mercat Nou
Santa Eulàlia
Torrassa
Florida
Can Serra
Rbla. Just Oliveras
Av. Carrilet
Bellvitge
L1 Hospital de Bellvitge
L2 Pep Ventura
Gorg
Sant Roc
Artigues Sant Adrià
Verneda
La Pau
Sant Martí
Bac de Roda
Encants
Sagrada Família
Monumental
Tetuan
Passeig de Gràcia
Sant Antoni
L2 Paral·lel
L3 Trinitat Nova
Roquetes
Canyelles
Valldaura
Mundet
Montbau
Vall d'Hebron
Penitents
Vallcarca
Lesseps
Fontana
Diagonal
Liceu
Drassanes
Poble Sec
Tarragona
Sants-Estació
Les Corts
Plaça del Centre
Maria Cristina
Palau Reial
L3 Zona Universitària
L4 Trinitat Nova
Via Júlia
Llucmajor
Maragall
Guinardó
Alfons X
Joanic
Verdaguer
Girona
Jaume I
Barceloneta
Ciutadella Vila Olímpica
Bogatell
Llacuna
Poblenou
Selva de Mar
Besòs Mar
Besòs
L4 La Pau
L5 Horta
Vilapicina
Virrei Amat
Congrés
Camp de l'Arpa
Hospital Sant Pau
Provença
Hospital Clínic
Entença
Est. RENFE
Badal
Collblanc
Pubilla Cases
Can Vidalet
Can Boixeres
Sant Ildefons
Gavarra
L5 Cornellà Centre
Cornellà Riera
Almeda
L'Hospitalet
St. Josep
Gornal
Ildefons Cerdà
Magòria La Campana
El Prat de Llobregat
To Airport
L6 Reina Elisenda
Sarrià
Les Tres Torres
La Bonanova
Muntaner
St. Gervasi
Pl. Molina
Gràcia
L6 Catalunya
L7 Av. Tibidabo
El Putxet
Pàdua
L7 Catalunya
L11 Can Cuiàs
Ciutat Meridiana
Torre Baró Vallbona
Casa de l'Aigua
L3 L11 Trinitat Nova
Torre Baró
Peu del Funicular
Tibidabo
Vallvidrera Superior
Vallvidrera Inferior
Baixador de Vallvidrera
Les Planes
To Sant Cugat, Sabadell Rbla., Terrassa
Parc Montjuïc
Mirador
Castell de Montjuïc
Miramar
Jaume I
San Sebastià
Sant Adrià de Besòs
Riu Besòs
AVINGUDA MERIDIANA
GRAN VIA
AVINGUDA DIAGONAL
GRAN VIA DE CARLES III
Mediterranean Sea

By Funicular & Rail Links

At some point in your journey, you may want to visit Tibidabo or Montjuïc (or both). A train called **Tramvía Blau (Blue Streetcar)** goes from Plaça Kennedy to the bottom of the funicular to Tibidabo. It operates every 15 to 20 minutes when it's running. From mid-April to September service is daily 10am to 8pm. In the off season it usually operates only Saturday and Sunday 10am to 6pm. The fare is 3€ one-way, 4.70€ round-trip. During the week, buses run from the Plaça Kennedy to the bottom of the funicular from approximately 10am to 6pm daily. The bus costs 2€ one-way.

At the end of the run, you can go the rest of the way by funicular to the top, at 503m (1,650 ft.), for a stunning panoramic view of Barcelona. The funicular operates only when the Fun Fair at Tibidabo is open. Opening times vary according to the time of year and the weather conditions. As a rule, the funicular starts operating 20 minutes before the Fun Fair opens and then every half-hour. During peak visiting hours, it runs every 15 minutes. The cost is 2€ one-way, 3€ round-trip.

The **Tibibus** (✆ **93-211-79-42**) goes from the Plaça de Catalunya (in the city center) to Tibidabo from June 24 to September 15 on Saturday and Sunday. It runs every 30 minutes from 11am to 6:30pm and sometimes 8:30pm, depending on when the park closes. The one-way fare is 2.50€. To reach Montjuïc, the site of the 1992 Olympics, take the **Montjuïc funicular** (✆ **93-318-70-74**). It links with subway lines 2 and 3 at Paral.lel (in the Catalán language, a period in the middle of a word, such as in "Paral.lel," isn't a misprint but a pronunciation guide). In fall and winter, the funicular runs Monday to Friday 7:30am to 8pm and Saturday and Sunday noon to 7pm; in spring and summer, it runs Monday to Friday 7:30am to 10pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 10pm.

[FastFACTS] BARCELONA

Consulates For information on embassies, see "Fast Facts," p. 755. The **U.S. Consulate,** Reina Elisenda 23 (✆ **93-280-22-27;** train: Reina Elisenda), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm. The **Canadian Consulate,** Plaça de Catalunya 9 (✆ **93-412-72-36;** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 12:30pm. The **U.K. Consulate,** Av. Diagonal 477 (✆ **93-366-62-00;** Metro: Hospital Clínic), is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 1:30pm. The **Australian Consulate** is at Av. Diagonal 458, 3rd floor (✆ **93-490-90-13;** Metro: Diagonal), and is open Monday to Friday 10am to noon.

Currency Exchange Most banks exchange currency Monday to Friday 8:30am to 2pm and often again in the afternoon. In the downtown area, except in the summer, many banks also open on Saturday morning. A major *oficina de cambio* (exchange office) is at the Estació Central de Barcelona-Sants, the principal rail station. It's open Monday to Saturday 8:30am to 10pm, and Sunday 8:30am to 2pm and 4:30 to 10pm. Exchange offices at Barcelona's airport are open daily 6:30am to 11pm.

Dentists For dental needs, contact **Clínica Dental Barcelona,** Passeig de Gràcia 97 (✆ **93-487-83-29;** Metro: Diagonal), open daily 9am to midnight.

Doctors See "Hospitals," below.

Drugstores The most centrally located one is **Farmacia Montserrat,** La Rambla 118 (✆ **93-302-43-45;** Metro: Liceu). It's open daily 9am to 8pm. Pharmacies take turns staying open late at night. Those that aren't open post the names and addresses of pharmacies in the area that are.

Emergencies To report a fire, call ✆ **080;** to call an ambulance, ✆ **061;** to call the police, ✆ **091.**

Hospitals Barcelona has many hospitals and clinics, including **Clínic Barcelona** (www.hospitalclinic.org; ✆ **93-227-54-00**) and **Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau,** at the intersection of Carrer Cartagena and Carrer Sant Antoni María Claret (✆ **93-291-90-00;** Metro: Hospital de Sant Pau).

Internet Access Internet cafes are found throughout Barcelona. Charging only 2€ per hour, **Cybercafe Coffee & Bit,** Carrer de Fluvià 40 (✆ **93-266-45-64;** Metro: Selva de Mar), is open daily 9am to 1am.

Newspapers & Magazines The *International Herald-Tribune* is sold at major hotels and nearly all the news kiosks along Les Rambles. Sometimes you can buy *USA Today* or one of the London newspapers, such as the *Times*. Barcelona's leading daily newspapers, which often list cultural events, are *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia*.

Police In an emergency, call ✆ **091.**

Post Office The main post office is at Plaça d'Antoni López (www.correos.es; ✆ **93-486-80-50;** Metro: Jaume I). It's open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 9:30pm and Saturday 8:30am to 2pm for sending letters and telegrams.

Safety Be particularly careful with cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets in Barcelona, particularly on the world-famous Les Rambles. The southern part of boulevard, near the waterfront, is the most dangerous section, especially at night. Proceed with caution.

Taxis See "Getting Around," above.

Telephone Dial ✆ **11818** (www.telefonica.es) for national information. For elsewhere in Spain, dial ✆ **1409.** Most local calls cost .40€. Hotels impose surcharges on phone calls, especially long distance, either in Spain or abroad. There is no longer a central telephone office, but calls can be made in comfort and security from phone centers on Les Rambles.

Transit Information For general **RENFE (train)** information, visit www.renfe.es or dial ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

EXPLORING BARCELONA

Spain's second-largest city is also its most cosmopolitan and avant-garde. Barcelona is filled with world-class museums and landmark buildings. Medieval attractions, including the cathedral and atmospheric streets and squares, concentrate in the Barri Gòtic, while the striking Modernist architecture is concentrated in l'Eixample. The greatest of the art museums are either on Montjuïc (Museu d'Art de Catalunya and Fundació Joan Miró) or in the Barri de la Ribera (Museu Picasso). No visitor will want to miss Les Rambles, the famous tree-lined promenade dividing the Barri Gòtic from El Raval.

Barri Gòtic

One of Barcelona's greatest attractions is not a single sight but an entire neighborhood, the **Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter)** ★★. This is the old aristocratic quarter, parts of which have survived from the Middle Ages. Spend at least 2 or 3 hours exploring its narrow streets and squares, which continue to form a vibrant, lively neighborhood. Start by walking up the Carrer del Carme, east of Les Rambles.

The Barri Gòtic.

The Catedral de Barcelona.

A nighttime stroll adds drama, but exercise good sense. The buildings are austere and sober for the most part, the cathedral being the crowning achievement. Roman ruins and the vestiges of 3rd-century walls add further interest. Consult your map; this area is intricately detailed and filled with many attractions that are easy to miss.

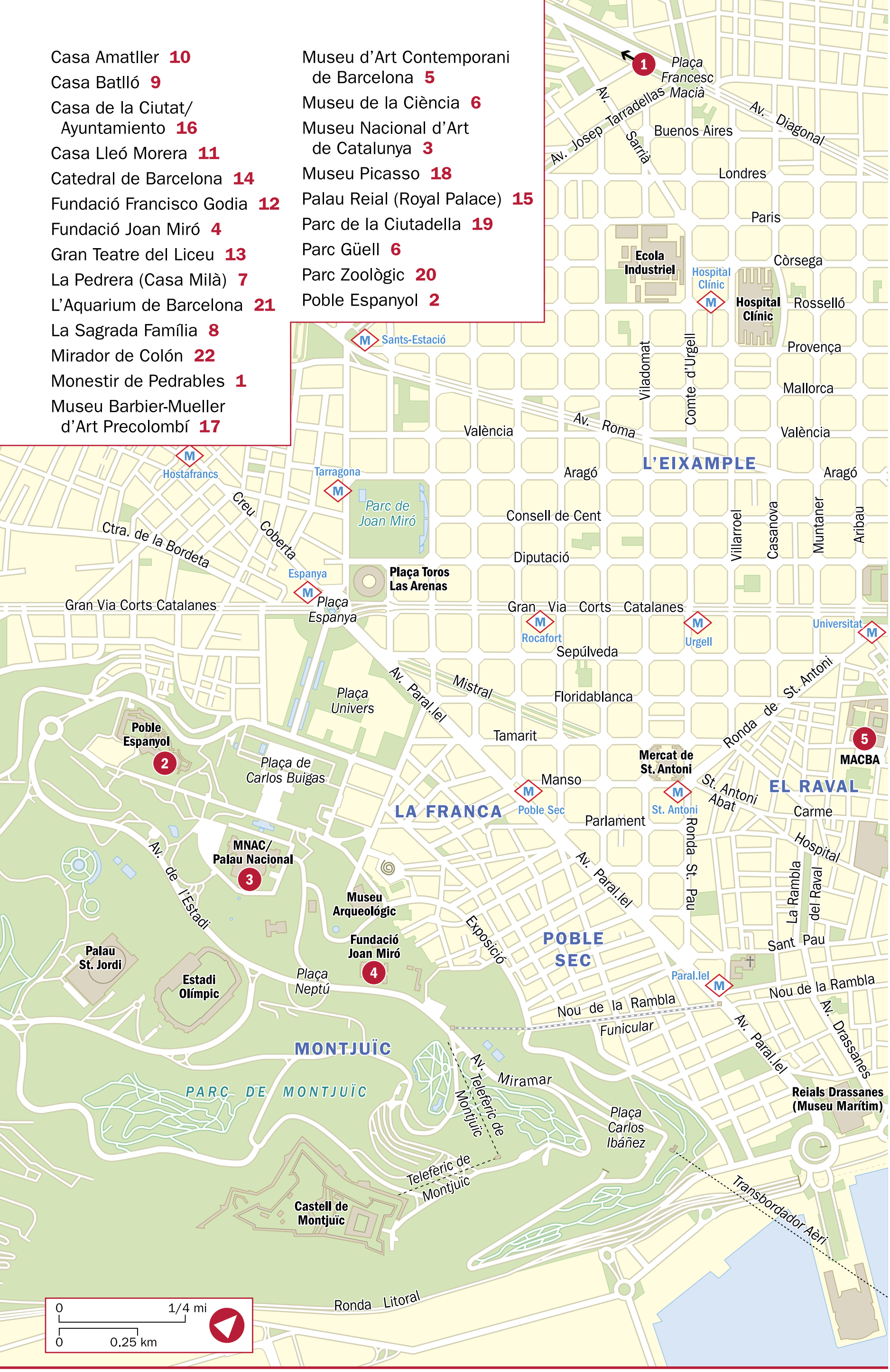
Casa de la Ciutat GOVERNMENT BUILDING Constructed at the end of the 14th century, the building that houses the municipal government is one of the best examples of Gothic civil architecture in the Catalán Mediterranean style. Across the landmark square from the Palau de la Generalitat, it has been endlessly renovated and changed. Behind a neoclassical facade, the building has a splendid courtyard and staircase. Its major architectural highlights are the 15th-century Salón de Ciento (Room of the 100 Jurors) and the black marble Salón de las Crónicas (Room of the Chronicles). The Salón de Ciento, in particular, represents a medley of styles.

Plaça de Sant Jaume. ☎ **93-402-70-00.** Free admission. Sun 10am–1:30pm. Metro: Jaume I or Liceu.

Catedral de Barcelona ★★ CATHEDRAL Barcelona's cathedral is a celebrated example of Catalán Gothic architecture. Construction began at the end of the 13th century and was nearly completed in the mid–15th century (although the west facade dates from the 19th c.). The three naves, cleaned and illuminated, have splendid Gothic details. With its large bell towers, blending of medieval and Renaissance styles, beautiful **cloister ★**, high altar, side chapels, handsomely sculptured choir, and Gothic arches, this ranks among Spain's most impressive cathedrals. Vaulted galleries in the cloister, enhanced by forged iron grilles, surround a garden of magnolias, medlars, and palm trees. The historian Cirici called this "the loveliest oasis in Barcelona." The cloister, illuminated on Saturday and during fiestas, also contains a **museum of medieval art.** Its most notable work is the 15th-century *La Pietat* of Bartolomé Bermejo. You can take an elevator to the roof (Mon–Sat 10:30am–12:15pm and 5:15–7pm), where you'll have a wonderful view of Gothic Barcelona. At noon on Sunday, you can watch the *sardana,* a Catalán folk dance, performed in front of the cathedral. Allow about an hour here.

Plaça de la Seu s/n. www.catedralbcn.org. ☎ **93-315-15-54.** Admission to cathedral free; museum 2€; global ticket to museum, choir, rooftop terraces, and towers 5€. Cathedral daily 8am–12:45pm and 5:15–7:30pm; cloister museum daily 10am–12:30pm and 5:15–7pm. Metro: Jaume I.

Casa Amatller	**10**
Casa Batlló	**9**
Casa de la Ciutat/ Ayuntamiento	**16**
Casa Lleó Morera	**11**
Catedral de Barcelona	**14**
Fundació Francisco Godia	**12**
Fundació Joan Miró	**4**
Gran Teatre del Liceu	**13**
La Pedrera (Casa Milà)	**7**
L'Aquarium de Barcelona	**21**
La Sagrada Família	**8**
Mirador de Colón	**22**
Monestir de Pedrables	**1**
Museu Barbier-Mueller d'Art Precolombí	**17**
Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona	**5**
Museu de la Ciència	**6**
Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya	**3**
Museu Picasso	**18**
Palau Reial (Royal Palace)	**15**
Parc de la Ciutadella	**19**
Parc Güell	**6**
Parc Zoològic	**20**
Poble Espanyol	**2**



1
Plaça Francesc Macià
Av. Josep Tarradellas
Sarrià
Av. Diagonal
Buenos Aires
Londres
Paris
Ecola Industriel
Hospital Clínic
Hospital Clínic
Còrsega
Rosselló
Provença
Mallorca
València
Sants-Estació
Viladomat
Comte d'Urgell
Av. Roma
València
L'EIXAMPLE
Aragó
Aragó
Hostafrancs
Tarragona
Parc de Joan Miró
Creu Coberta
Ctra. de la Bordeta
Consell de Cent
Villarroel
Casanova
Muntaner
Aribau
Diputació
Espanya
Plaça Toros Las Arenas
Plaça Espanya
Gran Via Corts Catalanes
Gran Via Corts Catalanes
Rocafort
Urgell
Universitat
Sepúlveda
Mistral
Av. Paral.lel
Floridablanca
Ronda de St. Antoni
Plaça Univers
Tamarit
Poble Espanyol
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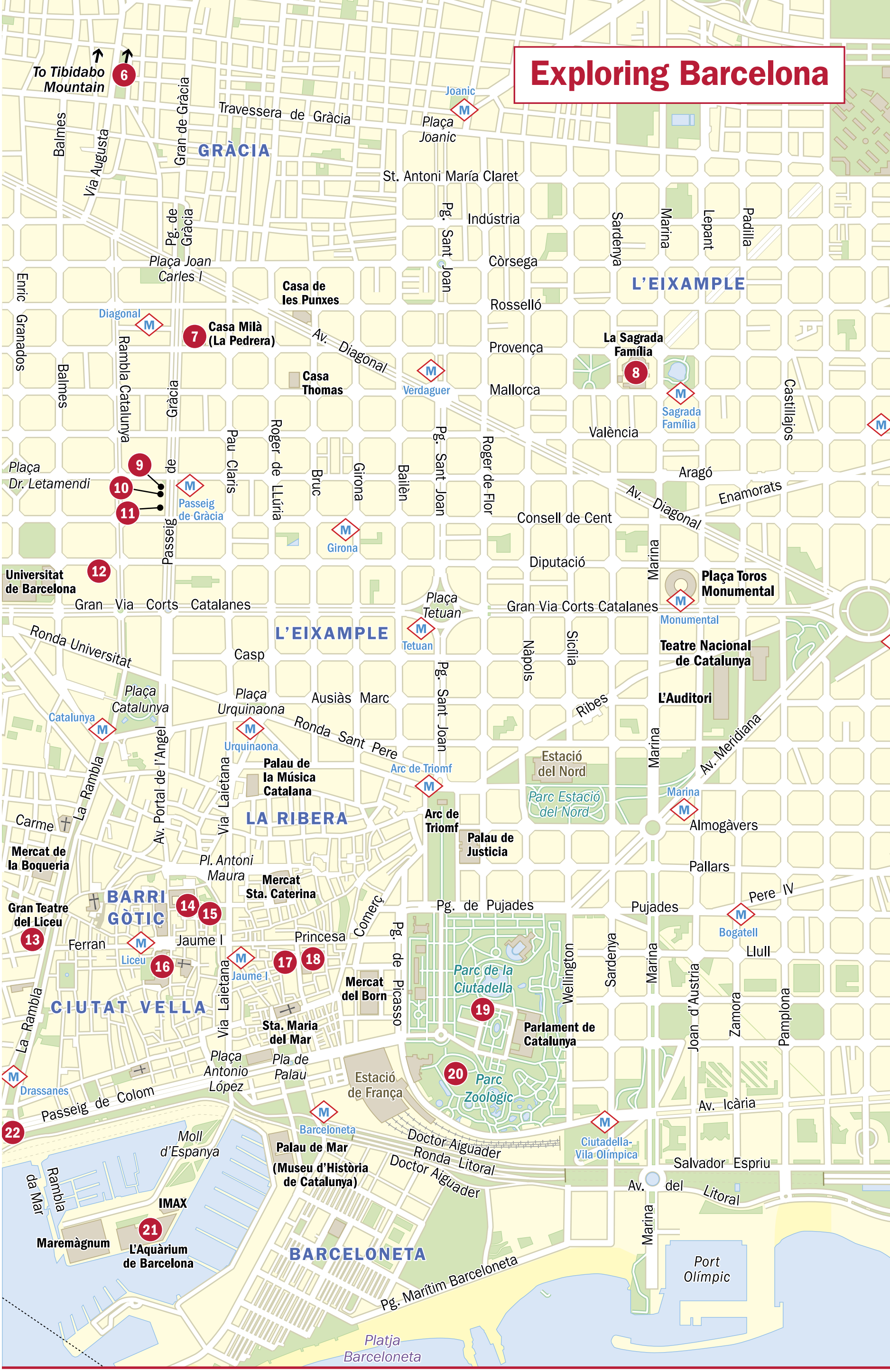
MACBA
Mercat de St. Antoni
Plaça de Carlos Buigas
Manso
Poble Sec
St. Antoni
St. Antoni Abat
EL RAVAL
LA FRANCA
Parlament
Carme
MNAC/ Palau Nacional
3
Av. de l'Estadi
Ronda St. Pau
Av. Paral.lel
Hospital
Museu Arqueològic
Exposició
La Rambla
del Raval
POBLE SEC
Sant Pau
Palau St. Jordi
Fundació Joan Miró
4
Estadi Olímpic
Plaça Neptú
Paral.lel
Nou de la Rambla
Nou de la Rambla
Funicular
Av. Drassanes
Av. Paral.lel
MONTJUÏC
Miramar
Av. Teleferic de Montjuïc
PARC DE MONTJUÏC
Plaça Carlos Ibáñez
Reials Drassanes (Museu Marítim)
Teleferic de Montjuïc
Castell de Montjuïc
Transbordador Aèri
Ronda Litoral
0 1/4 mi
0 0.25 km
M

Exploring Barcelona


To Tibidabo Mountain
6
Balmes
Via Augusta
Gran de Gràcia
Travessera de Gràcia
GRÀCIA
Joanic
M
Plaça Joanic
St. Antoni María Claret
Pg. de Gràcia
Pg. Sant Joan
Indústria
Sardenya
Marina
Lepant
Padilla
Plaça Joan Carles I
Còrsega
Enric Granados
Casa de les Punxes
L'EIXAMPLE
Rosselló
Diagonal
Casa Milà (La Pedrera)
7
Av. Diagonal
Provença
La Sagrada Família
8
Casa Thomas
Verdaguer
Mallorca
Sagrada Família
Castillejos
Rambla Catalunya
Gràcia
València
Pau Claris
Roger de Llúria
Bruc
Girona
Bailèn
Pg. Sant Joan
Roger de Flor
Plaça Dr. Letamendi
9
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Passeig de Gràcia
Aragó
Av. Diagonal
Enamorats
Consell de Cent
Girona
Diputació
Marina
Universitat de Barcelona
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Plaça Toros Monumental
Gran Via Corts Catalanes
Plaça Tetuan
Gran Via Corts Catalanes
Monumental
Ronda Universitat
L'EIXAMPLE
Tetuan
Casp
Nàpols
Sicília
Teatre Nacional de Catalunya
Plaça Catalunya
Plaça Urquinaona
Ausiàs Marc
L'Auditori
Catalunya
Urquinaona
Ronda Sant Pere
Pg. Sant Joan
Ribes
La Rambla
Av. Portal de l'Àngel
Via Laietana
Palau de la Música Catalana
Arc de Triomf
Estació del Nord
Av. Meridiana
Marina
Parc Estació del Nord
Marina
Carme
LA RIBERA
Arc de Triomf
Almogàvers
Mercat de la Boqueria
Palau de Justicia
Pl. Antoni Maura
Pallars
Mercat Sta. Caterina
Gran Teatre del Liceu
BARRI GÒTIC
14
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Pg. de Pujades
Pujades
Pere IV
Bogatell
13
Ferran
Liceu
Jaume I
Princesa
Comerç
Llull
16
Jaume I
17
18
Pg. de Picasso
Parc de la Ciutadella
Wellington
Sardenya
Marina
Joan d'Austria
Zamora
Pamplona
Mercat del Born
La Rambla
CIUTAT VELLA
Via Laietana
19
Sta. Maria del Mar
Parlament de Catalunya
Plaça Antonio López
Pla de Palau
Estació de França
20
Parc Zoològic
Drassanes
Passeig de Colom
Av. Icària
Barceloneta
22
Moll d'Espanya
Doctor Aiguader
Ciutadella-Vila Olímpica
Palau de Mar (Museu d'Història de Catalunya)
Ronda Litoral
Salvador Espriu
Doctor Aiguader
Rambla de Mar
Av. del Litoral
IMAX
21
Marina
Maremàgnum
L'Aquàrium de Barcelona
BARCELONETA
Port Olímpic
Pg. Marítim Barceloneta
Platja Barceloneta

Palau Reial (Royal Palace) PALACE The former palace of the counts of Barcelona, this later became the residence of the kings of Aragón. It is believed that Isabel and Fernando received Columbus here when he returned from his first voyage to the New World. Here, some say, the monarchs got their first look at a Native American. The **Saló del Tinell,** a banquet hall with a wood-paneled ceiling held up by half a dozen arches, dates from the 14th century. Rising five stories above the hall is the **Torre del Reí Martí,** a series of porticoed galleries.

Plaça del Rei. ☎ **93-315-11-11.** Admission 7€. Summer Tues–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 10am–3pm; off season Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Jaume I. Bus: 16, 17, 19, 22, 40, or 45.

Barri de la Ribera

Museu Barbier-Mueller d'Art Precolombí ★ MUSEUM Inaugurated by Queen Sofía in 1997, this is one of the most important collections of pre-Columbian art in the world. Housed in the restored medieval Palacio Nadal, the collection contains almost 6,000 pieces of tribal and ancient art from Mesoamerica, Central America, the Andes, and the Amazon Basin. Josef Mueller (1887–1977) acquired the first pieces by 1908. Pre-Columbian cultures created religious, funerary, and ornamental objects of great stylistic variety with relatively simple means. Stone sculpture and ceramic objects are especially outstanding. For example, the Olmecs, who settled on the Gulf of Mexico at the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C., executed monumental sculpture in stone and magnificent figures in jade. Many exhibits focus on the Mayan culture, the most homogenous and widespread of its time, dating from 1000 B.C. Mayan artisans mastered painting, ceramics, and sculpture. Note the work by the pottery makers of the lower Amazon.

Carrer de Montcada 12–14. www.barbier-mueller.ch. ☎ **93-310-45-16.** Admission 3.50€ adults, 1.70€ students, free for children 15 and under; free to all 1st Sun of the month. Tues–Fri 11am–7pm; Sat–Sun 11am–8pm. Metro: Jaume I. Bus: 14, 17, 19, 39, 40, 45, or 51. Tourist bus: Ruta Sur (Azul).

Museu Picasso ★★ ART MUSEUM Two old palaces on a medieval street contain this museum of the work of Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), who spent much of his youth in Barcelona. He donated some 2,500 of his paintings, engravings, and drawings to the museum in 1970. Some of the paintings were done when he was as young as 9 years old. One portrait, dating from 1896, depicts his stern aunt, Tía Pepa. Another, completed when Picasso was 16, depicts *Science and Charity.* (His father was the model for the doctor.) Many works, especially the early paintings, show the artist's debts to van Gogh, El Greco, and Rembrandt; a famous series, *Las Meninas* (1957), is said to "impersonate" the work of Velázquez. The *La Vie* drawings from the Blue Period are perhaps the most interesting. His notebooks contain many sketches of Barcelona scenes. Because the works are arranged in approximate chronological order, you can get a wonderful sense of Picasso's development and watch as he discovered a trend or had a new idea, mastered it, grew bored with it, and then was off to something new. Additional space in a medieval mansion is used for temporary exhibitions. Allot 1½ hours for a visit here.

Montcada 15–19. www.museupicasso.bcn.cat. ☎ **93-256-30-00.** Admission 11€ adults, 6€ students and ages 16–25; free for children 15 and under and seniors 66 and over. Tues–Sun 10am–8pm. Metro: Jaume I (line 4).

Parc de la Ciutadella PARK/GARDEN Named the Park of the Citadel because it is the site of a former fortress, it is one of Barcelona's most peaceful corners. After Felipe V won the War of the Spanish Succession (Barcelona was

The gardens of the Parc de la Ciutadella.

on the losing side), he exacted revenge by ordering that this "traitorous" residential suburb be leveled. In its place rose a citadel. In the mid–19th century it, too, was leveled, but some architectural evidence survives in a governor's palace and an arsenal. Today lakes, gardens, and promenades fill most of the park, which also holds a **zoo** (p. 456). Gaudí contributed to the monumental fountain in the park when he was a student; the lampposts are also his.

Av. Wellington s/n. ✆ **93-225-67-80.** Free admission. Mar daily 10am–6pm; Apr daily 10am–7pm; May–Aug daily 10am–8pm; Sept daily 10am–6pm; Oct–Feb daily 10am–5pm. Metro: Ciutadella.

El Raval

Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona ★ ART MUSEUM A soaring white edifice in the once-shabby but rebounding Raval district, the Museum of Contemporary Art is to Barcelona what the Pompidou Center is to Paris. Designed by the American architect Richard Meier, the building itself is a work of art, manipulating sunlight to offer brilliant, natural interior lighting. On display in the 6,875 sq. m (74,000 sq. ft.) of exhibit space is the work of modern luminaries Tàpies, Klee, Miró, and many others. The museum has a library, bookshop, and cafeteria.

Plaça dels Angels 1. www.macba.es. ✆ **93-412-08-10.** Admission 8€ adults, 6.50€ students, free for children 14 and under and seniors 65 and over. Late June to late Sept Mon and Wed–Fri 11am–8pm; Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 10am–3pm; late Sept to late June Mon and Wed–Fri 11am–7:30pm, Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

L'Eixample

Casa Amatller HISTORIC HOME Constructed in a cubelike design with a Dutch gable, this building was created by Puig i Cadafalch in 1900. It stands in sharp contrast to its neighbor, the Gaudí-designed Casa Batlló (see below). The architecture of the Casa Amatller, imposed on an older structure, is a vision realized in ceramic, wrought iron, and sculptures. The structure combines grace notes of Flemish Gothic—especially on the finish of the facade—with elements of Catalán architecture. The gable outside is in the Flemish style. Inside, be sure

Casa Batlló's dripping facade.

to view the original Gothic Revival interior, now the headquarters of the Institut Amatller d'Art Hispanic. Only the library is open to the public.

Passeig de Gràcia 41. www.amatller.org. ✆ **93-487-72-17.** Free admission. Mon–Sun 10am–8pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Casa Batlló ★★ HISTORIC HOME Next door to the Casa Amatller, Casa Batlló was designed by Gaudí in 1905. Using sensuous curves in iron and stone, the architect gave the facade a lavish baroque exuberance. The balconies have been compared to "sculpted waves." The upper part of the facade evokes animal forms, and delicate tiles spread across the design. The downstairs building is the headquarters of an insurance company. Many tourists walk inside for a view of Gaudí's interior, which is basically as he designed it. ***Note:*** This is a place of business, so be discreet. The paid cultural visit takes you on an audio tour of the mezzanine where the Batlló family lived, the central light and air shaft, the attic, and the rooftop with its amazing chimneys. The visit also includes the hall and main staircase.

Passeig de Gràcia 43. www.casabatllo.es. ✆ **93-216-03-06.** Admission 18€ adults; 15€ children 5–16, students, and Catalunya residents; free for children 7 and under. Daily 9am–8pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Casa Lleó Morera HISTORIC HOME Between the Carrer del Consell de Cent and the Carrer d' Aragó stands one of the most famous buildings of the *modernisme* movement. Along with Casa Amatller and Casa Batlló, it is part of the so-called Mançana de la Discòrdia (Block of Discord), an allusion to the mythical judgment of Paris. Florid Casa Lleó, designed by Domènech i Montaner in 1905, was revolutionary in its day. That assessment still stands. The building is private, and the interior is closed to the public.

Passeig de Gràcia 35. No phone. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Fundació Francisco Godia 🎁 ART MUSEUM In the heart of Barcelona, this museum showcases the famous art collection of Francisco Godia Sales (1921–90), the Catalán art collector and entrepreneur. Godia acquired works by some of the most important artists of the 20th century, including Julio González, María Blanchard, Joan Ponç, Antoni Tàpies, and Manolo Hugué, who was a great friend

Hallmarks of *Modernisme*

The end of the 19th century saw a blossoming of creativity in architecture, and, to a lesser extent, in the visual arts as Spain looked forward to the new century. The Catalán region spearheaded the movement. In Barcelona, architects such as **Lluís Domènech i Montaner** (1850–1923) and the great master **Antoni Gaudí** (1852–1926) developed one of the most appealing, idiosyncratic forms of Art Nouveau, called *modernisme.* This Catalán variant took a playful stab at building with undulating lines and colorful, broken-tile mosaics.

Some of the most characteristic features of *modernisme* include the following:

- **Emphasis on the uniqueness of craft.** Like Art Nouveau practitioners in other countries, Spanish artists and architects rebelled against the era of mass production.
- **Use of organic motifs.** Asymmetrical, curvaceous designs were often based on plants and flowers.
- **Variety of mediums.** Wrought iron, stained glass, tile, and hand-painted wallpaper were some of the most popular materials.

The best of *modernisme* includes **Gaudí's apartment buildings** along Passeig de Gràcia and his massive unfinished cathedral, **La Sagrada Família.**

of Picasso. From its earliest stages, Godia realized the artistic importance of Catalán *modernisme* and collected works by painters like Santiago Rusiñol and Ramon Casas. Godia also delved deeper into the past, acquiring works, for example, of two of the most important artists of the 17th century: Jacob van Ruysdael and Luca Giordano.

Carrer de la Diputaciò 250. www.fundacionfgodia.org. ☎ **93-272-31-80.** Admission 5€ adults, 3€ children 5–16 and students, free for children 4 and under. Daily 10am–8pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

La Pedrera (Casa Milà) ★★★ HISTORIC HOME When locals first took a gander at this architectural masterpiece by Antoni Gaudí, they ridiculed it, nicknaming it "the Quarry" because of its fortresslike appearance. Today, a more sympathetic generation views it as one of the most outstanding examples of *modernista* architecture. Constructed between 1906 and 1912, the building was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1984. Currently, the structure houses the office of Fundació Caixa Catalunya, but guests are allowed to wander about the patios and the **Espai Gaudí** (loft and roof). Visitors may also go inside the Pedrera Apartment, allowing them to see how an apartment might have looked at the turn of the 20th century. Gaudí's sinuous, rippling facade stands in sharp contrast to the neoclassical structures that make up the neighborhood. For many visitors, the roof, with its centurion-like chimneys, is the highlight of the tour; it also offers some of the most panoramic vistas of Barcelona, including views of Sagrada Família.

The rooftop sculptures of La Pedrera.

Provença 261–265. www.catalunyacaixa.com/obrasocial. ☎ **93-484-59-00.** Admission 15€ adults, 11€

seniors and students, free for children 13 and under. Nov–Feb daily 9am–6:30pm; Mar–Oct daily 9am–8pm. Metro: Diagonal.

La Sagrada Família ★★★ CHURCH If you have time to see only one Catalán landmark, make it this one. Gaudí's unfinished masterpiece is one of the country's more idiosyncratic creations. Begun in 1882 and incomplete at the architect's death in 1926, this incredible basilica—the Church of the Holy Family—is a bizarre wonder. The languid, amorphous structure embodies the essence of Gaudí's style, which some have described as "Art Nouveau run wild." Admission includes a 20-minute video presentation. Work continues on the structure, with a completion date projected for 2025. Plan to spend an hour or more here.

Entrance from Carrer de Sardenya or Carrer de la Marina. www.sagradafamilia.org. ✆ **93-207-30-31.** Admission 13€ adults, 11€ under 18 or retired; elevator to the top (about 60m/200 ft.) 3€; guide or audio guide additional 4€. Oct–Mar daily 9am–6pm; Apr–Sept daily 9am–8pm. Closed Christmas Day, Dec 26, New Year's Day, and Jan 6. Metro: Sagrada Família.

Parc de Joan Miró PARK/GARDEN Dedicated to one of Catalunya's most famous artists, this park near the Plaça de Espanya was set aside in the 1990s and occupies an entire block. One of Barcelona's most popular parks, it is often called Parc de l'Escorxador (slaughterhouse), a reference to its former occupant. Its main features are an esplanade and a pond from which rises a giant sculpture by Miró, *Woman and Bird.* Palm, pine, and eucalyptus trees, as well as playgrounds and pergolas, complete the picture.

Daylight hours. Metro: Espanya.

Montjuïc

In the southern part of the city, the mountain park of **Montjuïc** ★ has splashing fountains, gardens, outdoor restaurants, and museums, making for quite an outing. There are many walks and vantage points from which to view the Barcelona skyline.

To reach the park, take the Montjuïc **funicular** (✆ **93-318-70-74**), which links with subway lines 2 and 3 at Paral.lel. In fall and winter, the funicular runs Monday to Friday 7:30am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday noon to 7pm; in spring and summer, it runs Monday to Friday 7:30am to 10pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 10pm. The round-trip fare is 9€.

Tracking Barcelona's *Modernisme*

The **Barcelona *Modernisme* Route** is an itinerary that points out not only the grand palaces and parks by Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner, and Puig i Cadafalch, but also calls your attention to simpler, more quotidian buildings, lampposts, benches, and decorative facades of the *modernisme* movement. To find all 115 spots on the route, you'll need to purchase the ***Modernisme* Route guidebook.** It costs 18€ (14€ for pensioners, the unemployed, and under age 18), but quickly pays for itself with reduced admissions (usually half price) at many of the *modernisme* sites. It is for sale at the main Tourist Information Center at Plaça de Catalunya as well as at the two ***Modernisme* Route** centers (Santa Creu i Sant Pau Hospital, Sant Antoni Maria Claret 167; and Güell Pavilions, Av. de Pedralbes 7). For more information and an online guide to the top 30 *modernisme* buildings, visit **http://rutadelmodernisme.com**.

Kiki Smith
Her Memory

The Fundació Joan Miró.

Fundació Joan Miró ★★ ART MUSEUM Born in 1893, Joan Miró was one of Spain's greatest artists, known for his whimsical abstract forms and brilliant colors. Some 10,000 works by the Catalán surrealist, including paintings, graphics, and sculptures, are collected here. The building has been greatly expanded in recent years, following the design of Miró's close friend Catalán architect Josep Lluís Sert. An exhibition in a modern wing charts Miró's artistic evolution from his first drawings at the age of 8 to his final works. The museum frequently mounts temporary exhibitions of contemporary art. Allow at least 1 hour.

Plaça de Neptú, Parc de Montjuïc. http://fundaciomiro-bcn.org. ✆ **93-443-94-70.** Admission 10€ adults, 8€ students, free for children 14 and under. July–Sept Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–8pm, Thurs 10am–9:30pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm; Oct–June Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–7pm, Thurs 10am–9:30pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm. Bus: 50 (at Plaça d'Espanya) or 55.

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya ★★★ ART MUSEUM This museum, which underwent massive renovations, is the major depository of Catalán art, both antique and modern. The National Art Museum of Catalunya is perhaps the most important center for Romanesque art in the world. More than 100 pieces, including sculptures, icons, and frescoes, are on display. The highlight is the collection of murals from various Romanesque churches. The frescoes and murals are displayed in apses much like those in the churches in which they were found. They're in sequential order, giving the viewer a tour of Romanesque art from its primitive beginnings to the more advanced late Romanesque and early Gothic eras. The contents of the former Museu d'Art Modern are also on display here and feature an impressive collection of late-19th- and early-20th-century Catalán works by such artists as Ramón Casa and Pau Gargallo. Allot 1½ hours for a visit here.

Palau Nacional, Parc de Montjuïc. www.mnac.es. ✆ **93-622-03-76.** Admission 10€ adults, 7€ ages 15–20, free for children 16 and under and seniors 65 and older. Tues–Sat 10am–7pm; Sun 10am–2:30pm. Metro: Espanya (line 1 or 3).

Poble Espanyol ☺ AMUSEMENT PARK In this re-created Spanish village, built for the 1929 World's Fair, regional architectural styles are reproduced. From the Levant to Galicia, 115 life-size reproductions of buildings and monuments represent the 10th to the 20th centuries. At the entrance, for example, stands a facsimile of the gateway to the walled city of Ávila. The center of the village has an outdoor cafe where you can sit and have drinks. Numerous shops sell provincial crafts and souvenir items, and in some of them you can see artists at work printing fabric and blowing glass. Since the 1992 Olympics, the village has included 14 restaurants and one disco. Many families delight in the faux Spanish atmosphere, but the more discriminating find it a bit of a tourist trap—overly commercialized and somewhat cheesy. It's a matter of personal taste. You'll find lots of mediocre places to eat here.

Av. Marqués de Comillas 13, Parc de Montjuïc. www.poble-espanyol.com. ✆ **93-508-63-00.** Admission 9.50€ adults, 6.60€ students, 5.60€ children 4–12, free for children 4 and under. Mon 9am–8pm; Tues–Thurs 9am–2am; Fri 9am–4am; Sat 9am–5am; Sun 9am–midnight. Metro: Espanya. Bus: 13 or 50.

The Waterfront & Barceloneta

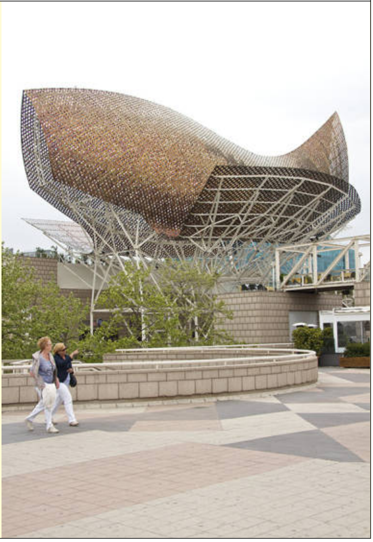
L'Aquarium de Barcelona ★★ ☺ AQUARIUM One of the most impressive testimonials to sea life anywhere opened in 1996 in Barcelona's Port Vell, a 10-minute walk from the bottom of Les Rambles. Among the largest aquariums in Europe, it contains 21 glass tanks positioned along either side of a wide, curving corridor. Each tank depicts a different marine habitat, with emphasis on everything from multicolored fish and corals to seagoing worms to sharks. The highlight is a huge "oceanarium" representative of the Mediterranean as a self-sustaining ecosystem. You view it from the inside of a glass-roofed, glass-sided tunnel that runs along its entire length, making fish, eels, and sharks appear to swim around you.

Port Vell. www.aquariumbcn.com. ✆ **93-221-74-74.** Admission 18€ adults, 15€ ages 60 and older, 13€ children 4–12 and students, free for children 3 and under. July–Aug Mon–Fri 9:30am–9pm, Sat–Sun 9:30am–11pm; June and Sept Mon–Fri 9:30am–9pm, Sat–Sun 9:30am–9:30pm; Oct–May daily 9:30am–9pm. Metro: Drassanes or Barceloneta. Bus: 14, 17, 19, 36, 38, 40, or 45.

Mirador de Colón ☺ MONUMENT/MEMORIAL This monument to Christopher Columbus was erected at the Barcelona harbor on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition of 1888. It consists of three parts, the first being a

Frank Gehry's Novel Fish

Peix, as it is known in Catalán, was architect's Frank O. Gehry's contribution to the Barcelona waterfront for the 1992 Olympic Games. Plunked down as a landmark of the Olympic Village, the fishlike abstract sculpture of stone, steel, and glass anchors the retail complex that Gehry Partners designed as an adjunct to the Hotel Arts (p. 503) project. The massive figure was the first project in which Gehry's firm used computer-aided design and manufacturing. The sculpture was designed in 3-D and delivered to the fabrication firm as a 3-D model. The completed work measures 35m × 54m (114 ft. × 177 ft.). A recurring motif in Gehry's work—fish curves are in all his buildings—it has become a symbol of the rejuvenated Barcelona waterfront.



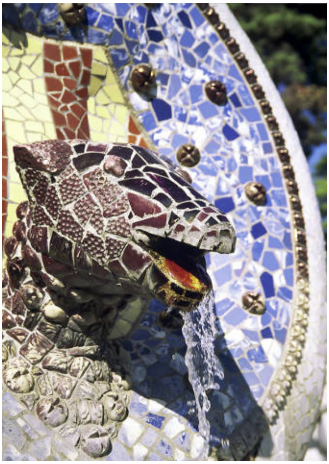
circular structure raised by four stairways (6m/20 ft. wide) and eight iron heraldic lions. On the plinth are eight bronze bas-reliefs depicting Columbus's principal feats. (The originals were destroyed; these are copies.) The second part is the base of the column, consisting of an eight-sided polygon, four sides of which act as buttresses; each side contains sculptures. The third part is the 50m (164-ft.) Corinthian-style column. The capital boasts representations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America linked together. Finally, over a princely crown and a hemisphere recalling the newly discovered part of the globe, stands a 7.5m-high (25-ft.) bronze statue of Columbus—pointing, ostensibly, to the New World—by Rafael Ataché. Inside the iron column, an elevator ascends to the *mirador.* From here, a panoramic view of Barcelona and its harbor unfolds.

Portal de la Pau. ☎ **93-302-52-24.** Admission 4€ adults, 3€ children 4–12, free for children 3 and under. June–Sept daily 9am–1:30pm and 4:30–8:30pm; Oct–May daily 9am–2pm and 3:30–7:30pm. Closed Jan 1, Oct 12, and Dec 25–26. Metro: Drassanes. Bus: 14, 36, 38, 40, 45, 57, 59, 64, 91, or 157.

Outlying Attractions

Monestir de Pedralbes ★ CONVENT One of the oldest buildings in Pedralbes (the city's wealthiest residential area) is this monastery founded in 1326 by Elisenda de Montcada, queen of Jaume II. Still a functioning convent of the Poor Clares, the establishment also holds the mausoleum of Queen Elisenda within its Gothic church. Walk through the cloisters, with nearly two dozen arches on each side, rising three stories high. A small chapel contains the chief treasure of the monastery, murals by Ferrer Bassa, who was the major artist of Catalunya in the 1300s. Among the outstanding works of art are Fra Angelico's *The Virgin of Humility* and 20 paintings from the early German Renaissance period. Italian Renaissance paintings range from the end of the 15th century to the middle of the 16th century.

The courtyard of the Monestir de Pedralbes.



LEFT: **A mosaic sculpture at Gaudí's Park Güell.**
RIGHT: **Barcelona as seen from Tibidabo Mountain.**

Baixada del Monestir 9. www.museuhistoria.bcn.es. ✆ **93-256-34-34.** Admission 7€ adults, 5€ students and seniors 65 and over, free for children 16 and under. Oct–Mar Tues–Sat 10am–2pm, Sun 10am–8pm; Apr–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 10am–8pm. Metro: Reina Elisenda. Bus: 22, 63, 64, 75, or 78.

Parc Güell ★ ☺ PARK/GARDEN Gaudí began this idiosyncratic park as a real-estate venture for a friend, the well-known Catalaán industrialist Count Eusebi Güell, but it was never completed. Although only two houses were constructed, it makes for an interesting excursion. The city took over the property in 1926 and turned it into a public park. One of the houses, **Casa-Museu Gaudí,** Carrer del Carmel 23, contains models, furniture, drawings, and other memorabilia of the park's architect, who lived here. (Ramón Berenguer, not Gaudí, designed the house.) Admission to the house is 5.50€ for adults, 4.50€ for students, children under 18, and seniors. It's open October to March daily 10am to 6pm, April to September daily 10am to 8pm. Gaudí completed several of the public areas, which today look like a surrealist Disneyland, complete with a mosaic pagoda and lizard fountain spitting water. Gaudí had planned to make this a model community of 60 dwellings, arranged somewhat like a Greek theater. A central grand plaza was built above a market, as well as an undulating bench decorated with ceramic fragments. The bizarre Doric columns of the would-be market are hollow, part of Gaudí's drainage system. One hour should be sufficient here.

Calle de Olot. www.casamuseugaudi.org. ✆ **93-219-38-11.** Free admission to park. May–Sept daily 9am–9pm; Oct–Apr daily 9am–7pm. Metro: Lesseps. Bus: 24, 25, 31, 74, 92, or 116.

Tibidabo Mountain ☺ NATURAL ATTRACTION North of the port, this hill offers the finest panoramic view of Barcelona. A funicular takes you up 488m (1,600 ft.) to the summit. The ideal time to visit this summit (the culmination of the Sierra de Collserola) is at sunset, when the city lights are on. At the time of the Olympics, a 255m (837-ft.) communications tower, **Torre de Collserola** (www.torredecollserola.com; ✆ **93-406-93-54**), was built. Although attacked by traditionalists for destroying the natural beauty of the mountain, Torre de Collserola offers the most panoramic views in all of Catalunya. It costs 5€ to go up the tower.

Avinguda del Tibidabo (from Plaça de Catalunya, take Metro line 3 to Penintents, then take bus 73 to Avinguda del Tibidabo, where you can board a special bus to the funicular). Funicular 2€ one-way, 3€ round-trip. Funicular runs daily when the park is open.

Organized Tours

Pullmantur, Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes 645 (www.pullmantur.es; Metro: Plaça de Catalunya), offers a number of tours and excursions with English-speaking guides. For a preview of the city, you can take a morning tour. They depart from the company's terminal daily at 9:45am and take in the cathedral, the Barri Gòtic, the monument to Columbus, Poble Espanyol, and the Olympic Stadium. Tickets cost 44€. An afternoon tour leaves at 3:30pm and visits some of the most outstanding architecture in l'Eixample, including Gaudí's La Sagrada Família. The tour includes Park Güell and a stop at the Picasso Museum. The cost is 43€.

Pullmantur also offers several excursions outside Barcelona. The daily tour of the monastery of Montserrat includes a visit to the Royal Basilica to view the famous sculpture of the Black Virgin. This tour, which costs 53€, departs daily at 9:30am and returns at 2:30pm to the company's terminal. A full-day Girona-Figueres tour includes a visit to Girona's cathedral and its Jewish Quarter, plus a trip to the Dalí museum. This excursion, which costs 153€, leaves Barcelona at 8:30am and returns at approximately 6:30pm (June–Sept Tues and Thurs). Call ahead—a minimum number of participants is required.

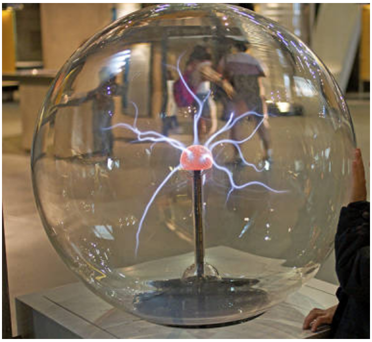
Another company that offers tours of Barcelona and the surrounding countryside is Juliá Travel, Ronda Universitat 5 (www.juliatravel.com; ✆ **93-317-64-54).** "Barcelona Artística" focuses on the city's artistic significance. The tour passes Domènech i Montaner's Casa Lleó Morera and takes in many of Gaudí's brilliant buildings, including Casa Milà (La Pedrera) and La Sagrada Família. Included is a visit to the Museu Picasso, depending on the day of your tour. The tour leaves at 3:30pm daily and returns at 7pm; the cost is 44€.

Especially for Kids

Cataláns have great affection for children, and although many Barcelona attractions are for adults, an array of amusements are designed for the young—and the young at heart.

CosmoCaixa, Museu de la Ciencia MUSEUM Children from 3 to 7 years old have their own place at this interactive science museum. The Clik del Nens is a science playground where small children can walk on a giant piano, make bubbles, lift a hippopotamus, and enter an air tunnel. They observe, experiment, and examine nature in a specially created environment. Special 1-hour guided sessions take place daily.

Teodor Roviralta 47–51. http://obrasocial.lacaixa.es/nuestroscentros/cosmocaixabarcelona/cosmocaixabarcelona_es.html. ✆ **93-212-60-50.** Admission 3€ adults, 2€ children 7 and older, students, and members of large families. Free to all first Mon of the month. Tues–Sun 10am–8pm. Tramvia Blau: Av. del Tibidabo. Bus: 17, 22, 58, 73, 75, 60, or 196.

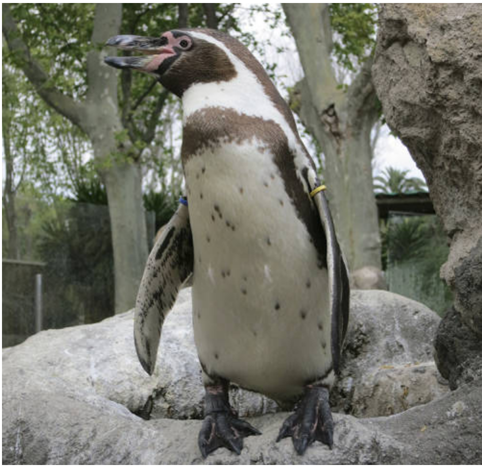


CosmoCaixa, the science museum.

Parc d'Atraccions (Tibidabo) AMUSEMENT PARK On top of Tibidabo (p. 454), this park combines tradition with modernity in rides dating from the beginning of the 20th century to 1990s novelties. In summer the place takes on a carnival-like atmosphere.

Plaça Tibidabo 3–4, Cumbre del Tibidabo. www.tibidabo.cat. ✆ **93-211-79-42.** Ticket for all rides: 25€ adults, 9€ seniors 60 and over and children up to 1.2m (4 ft.) in height, free for children 3 and under. May–June Sat–Sun noon–9pm; July–Sept Wed–Sun noon–10pm; off season Sat–Sun and holidays noon–6pm. Bus: 58 to Av. del Tibidabo to Tramvía Blau, and then funicular.

Parc Zoològic ★ ZOO Modern, with barless enclosures, this zoo is one of Spain's best. The setting itself is interesting, in a century-old garden spread over 13 hectares (32 acres) of Ciutadella Park. The splendid park contains around 7,500 animals belonging to some 500 species from all over the world. The fabled albino gorilla, Snowflake (Copito de Nieve), died in 2003; his three surviving offspring include a male and two females. There is a large collection of other primates, all in danger of extinction. The collection includes the titis, a New World species of monkey that is the world's smallest. Other endangered species housed at the zoo are a Sumatran tiger, a Sri Lanka leopard, and a cheetah. The main entrances to the zoo are on Ciutadella Park and Wellington.



A penguin at the Parc Zoològic.

Parc de la Ciutadella. www.zoobarcelona.com. ✆ **90-245-75-45.** Admission 17€ adults, 10€ students and children 3–12, free for children 2 and under. Summer daily 10am–7pm; off season daily 10am–6pm. Metro: Ciutadella, Barceloneta, or Arc de Triomf. Bus: 14, 17, 36, 39, 40, 41, 45, 51, 57, 59, 100, 141, or 157.

Active Pursuits

FITNESS CENTERS

The city's main fitness center is adjacent to the Olympic Stadium in an indoor/outdoor complex whose main attractions are its two beautifully designed swimming pools. Built for the 1992 Summer Olympics, the facility contains a health club and gym. It's open to the public; a full-day pass costs 9.80€. For the address and hours, see the Piscina Picornell review in "Swimming," below.

GOLF

One of the city's best courses, **Club de Golf Vallromanes,** Afueras s/n, Vallromanes, Barcelona (www.clubdegolfvallromanes.com; ✆ **93-572-90-64**), is 20 minutes north of the center by car. Nonmembers who reserve tee times in advance are welcome to play. The greens fee is 100€ on weekdays, 160€ on weekends. The club is open Wednesday to Monday 8am to 9pm.

Real Club de Golf El Prat, Plans de Bonvilar 17, 08227 (www.rcgep.com; ✆ **93-728-10-00**), is a prestigious club that allows nonmembers to play on two conditions: They must have a handicap issued by the governing golf body in their home country, and they must prove membership in a golf club at home. The club has two 18-hole par-72 courses. Greens fees are 114€ Monday to Friday. Members only can play after noon on weekends. Nonmembers' greens fees are 228€ unless you play with a guest; then there is a 50% discount. From Barcelona, follow Avinguda Once de Septiembre past the airport to Barrio de San Cosme. From there, follow the signs along Carrer Prat to the golf course.

SWIMMING

Most city residents head to the beaches near the Vila Olímpica or Sitges when they feel like swimming. If you're looking for an uncrowded pool, you'll find one at the **Esportiu Piscina DeStampa,** Carrer Rosic 12, in the Hospitalet district (✆ **93-334-56-00**). It's open Monday to Friday from 7:30am to 10pm, Saturday from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and Sunday from 10am to 2pm. Weekday admission is 5€; Saturday and Sunday, it's 6€.

A much better choice, however, allows you to swim where some Olympic events took place: **Piscines Picornell,** Av. de Estadi 30–38, on Montjuïc (www.picornell.cat; ✆ **93-423-40-41**). Adjacent to the Olympic Stadium, it incorporates two of the best swimming pools in Spain (one indoors, one outdoors). They're open to the public Monday to Friday 7am to midnight, Saturday 7am to 9pm, and Sunday 7am to 4pm. Admission costs 11€ in winter, 7€ in summer, and allows use of whichever pool is open, plus the gymnasium, the sauna, and the whirlpools. Bus no. 50 makes frequent runs from Plaça d'Espanya.

WHERE TO EAT

If money is no object, you'll find some of the grandest culinary experiences in Europe here. Diverse Catalán cuisine reaches its pinnacle in Barcelona, but you don't get just Catalán fare—the city is rich in the cuisines of all the major regions of Spain, including Castilla and Andalucía. Because of Barcelona's proximity to France, many of the finer restaurants serve French or French-inspired dishes.

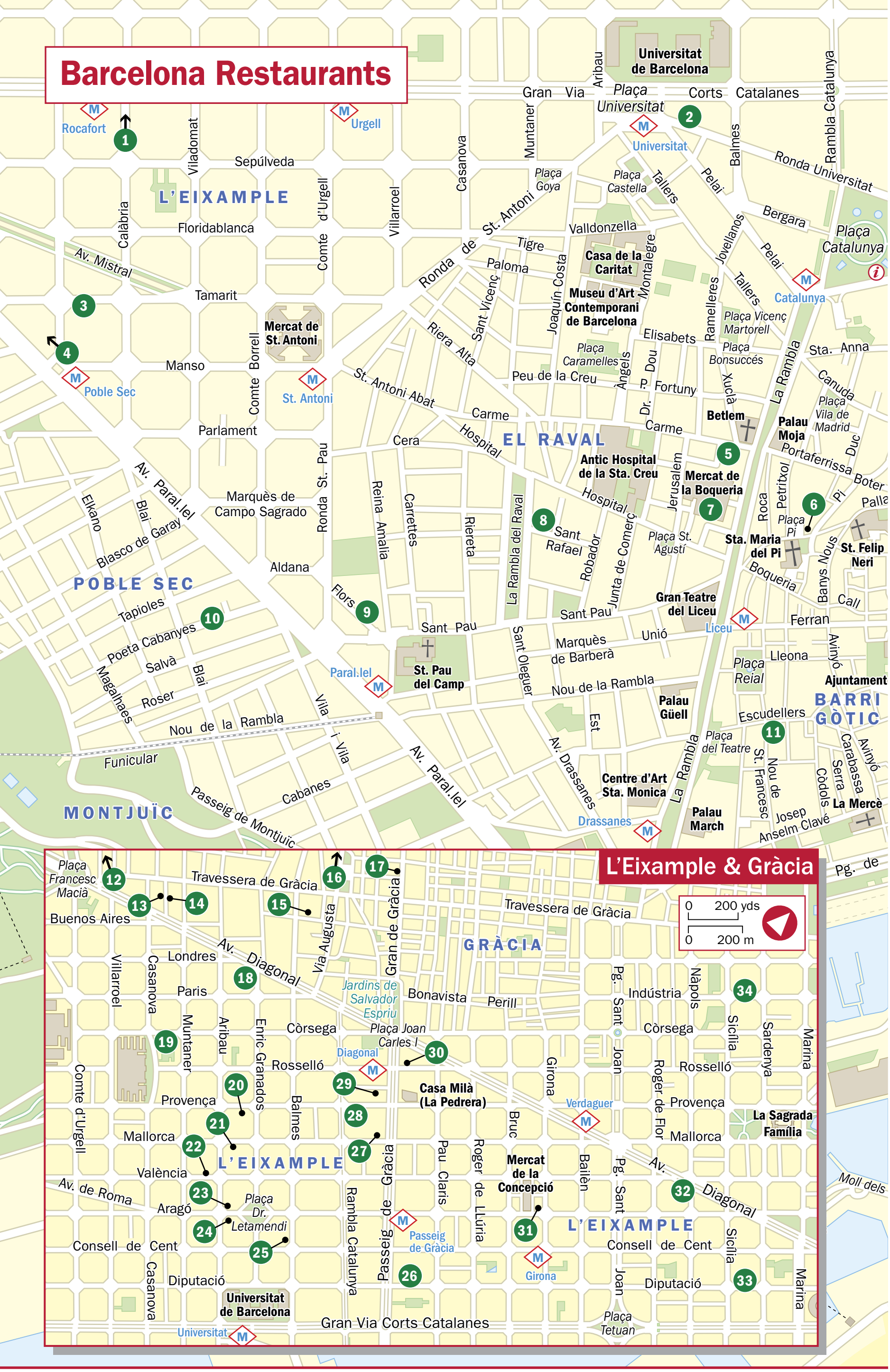
At the other end of the spectrum, finding an affordable restaurant in Barcelona is easier than finding an inexpensive hotel. ***Note:*** Reservations are seldom needed, except in the most expensive and popular places. The **Barri Gòtic** offers the cheapest meals. There are many budget restaurants in and around the **Carrer de Montcada,** site of the Picasso museum. Dining rooms in **l'Eixample** tend to be more formal and expensive, but less adventurous.

Ciutat Vella (Barri Gòtic, El Raval & La Ribera)

VERY EXPENSIVE

ABaC ★★ CONTEMPORARY SPANISH One of the leading chefs of Barcelona, Jordi Cruz follows his own culinary path, creating a *cuisine d'auteur* based on his imagination and a certain level of wizardry with the techniques of molecular cuisine. This means a menu of dishes you've had nowhere else. All this is served at a minimalist restaurant attracting some of the most serious foodies of Barcelona. When you arrive here, you never know what you'll be served, but chances are you'll like it. Cruz's savory cooking, a balance of flavor and harmonious combinations, charms most palates. Perhaps sometimes he doesn't quite hit the mark, but no one faults his creativity. Tempting dishes might include smoked salmon with cauliflower purée served under a smoke-filled bell jar, or a small

Barcelona Restaurants


Rocafort
Urgell
Universitat de Barcelona
Gran Via
Plaça Universitat
Corts Catalanes
Universitat
Aribau
Muntaner
Casanova
Viladomat
Sepúlveda
L'EIXAMPLE
Comte d'Urgell
Villarroel
Balmes
Rambla Catalunya
Ronda Universitat
Pelai
Bergara
Plaça Catalunya
Catalunya
Plaça Goya
Plaça Castella
Tallers
Jovellanos
Calàbria
Floridablanca
Av. Mistral
Tamarit
Mercat de St. Antoni
Ronda de St. Antoni
Valldonzella
Tigre
Paloma
Casa de la Caritat
Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona
Montalegre
Joaquín Costa
Sant Vicenç
Riera Alta
Elisabets
Ramelleres
Plaça Vicenç Martorell
Plaça Bonsuccés
Poble Sec
Manso
Comte Borrell
St. Antoni
St. Antoni Abat
Plaça Caramelles
Peu de la Creu
Àngels
Dou
P. Fortuny
Xuclà
La Rambla
Sta. Anna
Canuda
Plaça Vila de Madrid
Parlament
Carme
Cera
Hospital
EL RAVAL
Dr. Dou
Betlem
Palau Moja
Portaferrissa
Duc
Antic Hospital de la Sta. Creu
Jerusalem
Mercat de la Boqueria
Petritxol
Boter
Av. Paral.lel
Elkano
Blai
Blasco de Garay
Marquès de Campo Sagrado
Ronda St. Pau
Reina Amàlia
Carretes
Riereta
La Rambla del Raval
Sant Rafael
Robador
Junta de Comerç
Plaça St. Agustí
Roca
Plaça Pi
Pi
Palla
Sta. Maria del Pi
St. Felip Neri
Boqueria
Banys Nous
POBLE SEC
Aldana
Flors
Tapioles
Poeta Cabanyes
Salvà
Magalhaes
Roser
Sant Pau
Gran Teatre del Liceu
Liceu
Call
Ferran
Unió
Marquès de Barberà
Sant Oleguer
Paral.lel
St. Pau del Camp
Nou de la Rambla
Lleona
Avinyó
Plaça Reial
Ajuntament
Palau Güell
BARRI GÒTIC
Vila i Vila
Funicular
Est
Av. Drassanes
Escudellers
Plaça del Teatre
St. Francesc
Nou de
Carabassa
Serra
Còdols
Cabanes
Centre d'Art Sta. Mònica
La Mercè
Josep Anselm Clavé
MONTJUÏC
Passeig de Montjuïc
Drassanes
Palau March
Pg. de
Moll dels
L'Eixample & Gràcia
Plaça Francesc Macià
Travessera de Gràcia
Buenos Aires
Via Augusta
Gran de Gràcia
Londres
Av. Diagonal
GRÀCIA
Paris
Villarroel
Casanova
Muntaner
Aribau
Enric Granados
Jardins de Salvador Espriu
Bonavista
Perill
Pg. Sant Joan
Indústria
Nàpols
Còrsega
Plaça Joan Carles I
Diagonal
Rosselló
Casa Milà (La Pedrera)
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Mallorca
Bruc
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Pau Claris
Roger de Llúria
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Bailèn
Av. de Roma
Aragó
Plaça Dr. Letamendi
Rambla Catalunya
Passeig de Gràcia
Consell de Cent
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Diputació
Universitat de Barcelona
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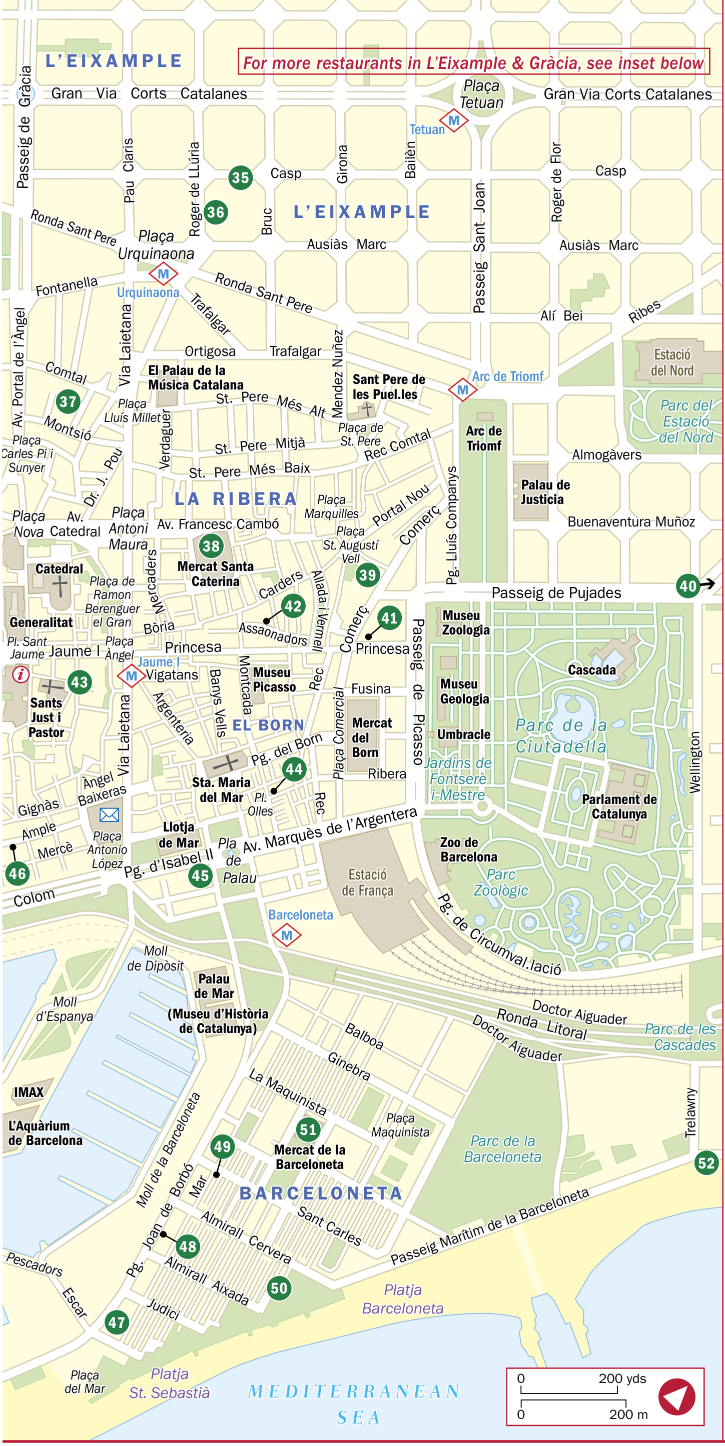
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glass of mushroom bisque with a hazelnut foam accompanied by an airy mushroom-truffle focaccio.

Carrer del Rec 7989. www.abacbarcelona.com. ☎ **93-319-66-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 30€–55€; tasting menus 125€–145€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon 8:30–10:30pm; Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm. Metro: Barceloneta or Jaume I.

Ca L'Isidre ★ CATALÁN This superb 50-seat restaurant has seen the transformation of its neighborhood from Barcelona's lowlife bohemian barrio to a hot spot for dining and nightlife. Isidre Gironés and his wife Montserrat have run the restaurant since 1970, and he starts every day by shopping at La Boquería for the best fresh produce, meats, and fish before he can even draw up the menu. An advocate of market cuisine since the restaurant opened, Isidre also treasures Catalán culinary traditions, which may be why everyone from anonymous gastronomes to the king and queen have come here to eat. For starters, try, if featured, lobster gazpacho with "fruits of the sea," or the yellowfin tuna tartare with salmon eggs. Isidre also prepares an exquisite version of baby octopus—no more than an inch (2.5cm) in diameter—in a red wine sauce. Among the house specialties are veal tripe with chickpeas; pigs' trotters stuffed with porcini mushrooms, truffles, and duck liver; and roasted turbot with artichokes, served with a luscious fresh burrata.

Les Flors 12. www.calisidre.com. ☎ **93-441-11-39.** Reservations required. Main courses 25€–40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Paral.lel.

Casa Leopoldo 🎁 SEAFOOD/MEDITERRANEAN Also located in the Raval, this colorful restaurant was founded in 1929 and has flourished by serving fabulous fresh seafood. There's a popular stand-up tapas bar in front, as well as two dining rooms. Some serious foodies, who have been dining here for decades, launch their repast with scrambled eggs with young garlic and meaty prawns. Some of the best dishes have barely changed over the years: perfectly grilled turbot, small Norwegian lobsters sautéed with clams, and a truly savory oxtail stew that recalls the days when the neighborhood was the haunt of matadors and bullfight fans.

Sant Rafael 24. www.casaleopoldo.com. ☎ **93-441-30-14.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–35€; tasting menu 50€. Tues–Thurs menu 25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–4pm; Tues–Sat 9–11pm. Closed 1 week in Jan, 1 week at Easter, and Aug 4–Sept 4. Metro: Liceu or Paral.lel.

Tickets ★★ CONTEMPORARY CATALÁN It's not elBulli, but it's as close as you can get in Barcelona. This complex of dining bars is the joint project of Ferran Adrià and his younger brother Albert. If you read their semi-surreal justifications (they're part of the menu), you learn that the food departs from the elBulli experimentalism for a joyous celebration of *la vida tapa*. About 90 seats are scattered among six bars, and the food re-interprets traditional tapas in a style meant to surprise and delight. At La Presumida (the Seafood Bar), you can sample Galician oysters raw, in *pil-pil* sauce, in pickling brine, and in another half-dozen preparations that depend on chef's whim. (You can also get clams, shrimp, goose barnacles . . .) La Estrella bar is devoted mostly to the beer of that name, while Camarote de los Marx (the Marx Brothers' Cabin) is devoted to pork-based tapas. Nostromo 180286 is futuristic in design and features such elBulli dishes as Manchego cheese ice cream and crisp bacon with mustard sauce and tart cucumber pickle. At *El Garatge* (the Garage), you can order such classics as *pa amb tomàquet* (bread smeared with fresh tomato) and a whole lot of steamed buns with various fillings. *La Dolça* (the Sweet) is Albert's baby, and it serves nothing but dessert tapas, including Mató cheese with a piece of honeycomb. Wherever you're seated, it's almost impossible to choose, so most diners throw up their hands and let the staff bring 20 or so little dishes to the table as part of the tasting menu. Reservations must be made at the website, which books 90 days ahead. Seats for each day are snapped up quickly, so be ready to book very early.

Paral.lel 164. www.ticketsbar.es. No phone. Online reservations required. Dishes start at 10€; tasting menu 150€ with wines. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 7–11:30pm; Sat 1–4:30pm. Closed first 3 full weeks in Aug, last week of Dec. Metro: Poble Sec.

EXPENSIVE

Espai Sucre ★ 🎁 DESSERTS Think of this place as serving molecular cuisine, but where the molecule in question is sucrose. Espai Sucre (literally, "Sugar Space") is Barcelona's most unusual dining room, with a minimalist decor and seating for 30. Desserts are definitely original: "Salad" is likely to be small cubes of spicy milk pudding resting on matchsticks of green apple with baby arugula leaves, peppery caramel, dabs of lime kefir and lemon curd, and toffee. A tiny phyllo pyramid, no bigger than a pencil eraser, conceals a filling of lemon and rosemary marmalade. Ever had a soup of litchi, celery, apple, and eucalyptus? If some of the concoctions frighten your palate, you'll find comfort in the more familiar—vanilla cream with coffee sorbet and caramelized banana. Every dessert comes with a recommendation for the appropriate wine to accompany it. There is a short list of so-called "salty" (that is, savory) dishes for those who want to cool it with the sugar. Actually, they're quite good and imaginatively prepared, including the likes of ginger couscous with pumpkin and grilled stingray, or artichoke cream with poached quail egg and serrano ham. The lentil stew with foie gras is first rate, as are the spicy veal "cheeks" with green apples.

Princesa 53. www.espaisucre.com. ☎ **93-268-16-30.** Reservations required. Tasting menus 45€–50€; 3-dessert platter 35€; 3-chocolate platter 42€; 5-dessert platter 45€. DC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 9–11:30pm; Fri–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Dec 24 to 1st week of Jan. Metro: Arco de Triompho or Jaume I.

Restaurant Hofmann ★ CATALÁN/FRENCH This restaurant is famous in part because its German/Catalán chef-owner Mey Hofmann cuts a wide public swath. Trained as a jewelry designer, she turned her talents to cooking, catering, and teaching cooking. Her menu changes roughly six times a year with the season and cuts across borders with both Catalán and Gascogne dishes—all given a modern touch. You might start with her traditional warm sardine tart, or opt for a modern interpretation of stuffed mushrooms (false cèpes stuffed with caramelized pumpkin and mascarpone). The fish changes nightly, but one of her signature preparations is grilled fish with thin slices of bacon, market vegetables, and a red-wine sauce. Desserts come from Hofmann's French-style pastry shop.

Granada del Penedes 14. www.hofmann-bcn.com. ☎ **93-218-71-65.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–35€; 4-course fixed-price lunch menu 45€, 4-course fixed-price dinner Tues–Wed 55€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–3:15pm and 9–11:15pm. Metro: Diagonale.

MODERATE

Comerç 24 ★★ 🎁 CONTEMPORARY CATALÁN View a dining visit here as an opportunity to experience the culinary vision of a rare artist. The chef and owner is Carles Abellan, a Ferran Adrià protege who has given his imaginative, distinctive interpretation to all the longtime favorite dishes of Catalunya. Abellan uses fresh seasonal ingredients, balanced sauces, and bold but never outrageous combinations; more to the point, he believes in split-second timing. Perhaps you'll sample his fresh salmon "perfumed" with vanilla and served with yogurt. Other vibrant, earthy dishes include a veal entrecôte with wasabi sauce or ravioli with cuttlefish and fresh morels. Abellan also serves an old-fashioned snack that Catalán children used to enjoy (including Adrià, who has spoken of it with great nostalgia). It is a combination of chocolate, salt, and bread flavored with olive oil. The dining room's avant-garde, minimalist design provides a soothing, neutral backdrop to the culinary pyrotechnics. The restaurant lies close to the waterfront along Barceloneta, the Parc de la Ciutadella, and Barri Gòtic.

Carrer Comerç 24, La Ribera. www.projectes24.com. ☎ **93-319-21-02.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–40€; tasting menus 72€–95€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed 10 days in Dec. Metro: Arco de Triompho or Estación de Francia.

Els Quatre Gats 🏷 SPANISH This has been a Barcelona legend since 1897. "The Four Cats" (in Catalán slang, "just a few people") was a favorite of Picasso, Rusiñol, and other artists, who once hung their works on its walls. On a narrow cobblestone street in the Barri Gòtic near the cathedral, the *fin de siècle* cafe has been the setting for piano concerts by Isaac Albéniz and Ernie Granados, and for murals by Ramón Casas. It was a base for members of the *modernisme* movement and figured in the city's intellectual and bohemian life. Today the restored bar remains a popular meeting place for Catalàns, as well as a must-visit spot for Picasso fans. (One of his first jobs was designing the original menu.) The fixed-price meal is one of the better bargains in town, considering the locale. The unpretentious Spanish cooking here is simple market cuisine that adds seasonal specials to a cuisine otherwise based on the larder. For starters, you might try the onion soup au gratin with egg and Parmesan cheese. The kitchen also does a great job with the classic *alcachofas y jamón* (artichokes and bits of ham and sausage), as well as roasted salt cod with a garlicky mayonnaise. The sea bass stuffed with red peppers and served with a garlic vinaigrette is also very good.

Montsió 3. www.4gats.com. ☎ **93-302-41-40.** Reservations required Sat–Sun. Main courses 12€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–2am. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

La Gardunya CATALÁN This is the most famous restaurant in Barcelona's covered food market, La Boqueria. Originally conceived as a hotel, it has concentrated on food since the 1970s. Battered, somewhat ramshackle, and a bit claustrophobic, it's fashionable with self-styled bohemians as well as gastronomic tourists. It's near the back of the market, so you'll pass endless rows of fresh produce, cheese, and meats before you reach it. You can dine downstairs near a crowded bar, or upstairs, which is a bit more formal. Food is ultrafresh—the chefs certainly don't have to travel far for the ingredients. You might try cannelloni Rossini, grilled hake with herbs, *rape marinera* (stewed monkfish), Catalán seafood rice dishes, or *zarzuela* (a stew akin to bouillabaisse) of fresh fish with spices.

Carrer Jerusalem 18. ☎ **93-302-43-23.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–30€; fixed-price lunch 15€, dinner 16€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 8pm–midnight. Metro: Liceu.

Quo Vadis SPANISH/CONTINENTAL Elegant and impeccable, this is one of the finest old-fashioned restaurants in Barcelona and has always been associated with the nearby Liceu opera house. In a century-old building near the open stalls of La Boquería food market, it was established in 1948. The three wood-paneled dining rooms exude a certain conservative charm. Signature dishes include roast suckling pig, fried gooseliver with prunes, filet of *toro* (bull) with wine sauce, and a variety of grilled fish, including a dramatic flambéed sea bass roasted with fennel fronds. In the fall, Quo Vadis features a number of mushroom dishes using fungi foraged from the Catalunyan countryside. There's a wide choice of desserts made with seasonal fruits imported from all over Spain.

Carme 7. ☎ **93-302-40-72.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 21€–35€; fixed-price menu 39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:15–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Metro: Liceu or Plaça de Catalunya.

INEXPENSIVE

Café de L'Academia ★ 🏷 CATALÁN/MEDITERRANEAN In the center of the Barri Gòtic, a short walk from Plaça Sant Jaume, this 15-table (20–25 in summer) restaurant looks expensive but is really one of the most affordable (and one of the best) in the medieval city. The building dates from the 15th century, but the restaurant was founded in 1987. Chef-owner Jordí Casteldi is a proponent of market cuisine. Try such delights as *lassanye de butifarra i ceps* (lasagna with Catalán sausage and porcini), *bacalla gratinado i musselina de carofes* (salt cod gratiné with an artichoke mousse), or *terrina d'berengueras amb formatge de cabra* (terrine of eggplant with goat cheese).

Carrer Lledó 1 (Barri Gòtic), Plaça Sant Just. ☎ **93-319-82-53.** Reservations required. Main courses 10€–18€; fixed-price menu (lunch only) 16€. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–1am. Closed last 2 weeks of Aug. Metro: Jaume I.

Cuines Santa Caterina ★★ 🎁 ASIAN/MEDITERRANEAN In the Santa Caterina market, top architects Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue created this soaring space with an open kitchen, a tapas bar, and chunky wooden tables. It's especially lively at lunchtime, when locals shout their orders after reading the scrawls on a chalkboard. With its different types of kitchens, ranging from Asia to Italy, this fusion cuisine is served against a backdrop that includes columns of light, ficus trees planted in between tables, and one wall composed of shelves stacked with wine, olive oil, and various vinegars. The food comes directly from the market, so it's very fresh. Many dishes are suitable for vegetarians, especially those with grilled fresh green asparagus or the delicious salads made, say, of melted cheese, nuts, and dates. The sushi tastes fresh and is prepared in the best tradition of Japan. A juice bar hawks vegetable and fruit drinks. From Thai green curry to grilled goat kid chops, the dishes are tasty and appealing. One diner called the chocolate cake "dangerously dark and brooding."

Mercado de Santa Caterina, Av. Francesc Cambó 17, La Ribera. www.cuinessantacaterina.com. ☎ **93-268-99-18.** Reservations not required. Main courses 8€–22€. AE, MC, V. Sun–Wed 1–4pm and 8–11:30pm; Thurs–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Metro: Jaume I.

Los Caracoles CATALÁN "The Snails" was founded in 1835 in the heart of the Gothic Quarter near Les Rambles, and the tantalizing aroma of roasting chicken still wafts down Carret Escudellers after all these years. The founding Bofarull family is still in charge of this time-mellowed favorite, which is seemingly visited by every tourist in town. Even though Los Caracoles hasn't been acclaimed the best restaurant in Barcelona since the time of the American Civil War, it remains a bastion of local culture and a favorite of old-time locals who mingle with diners from everywhere from Japan to the Yukon territories. The food on the menu at this old favorite—which was featured in the inaugural edition of *Spain on $5 a Day*—has never been altered. Some other good dishes are grilled langoustines, fried small squid, or chicken and ham croquettes, but generations have flocked here for the homey sustenance of rotisserie chicken.

Escudellers 14. www.loscaracoles.es. ✆ **93-301-20-41.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 8€–27€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:15pm–midnight. Metro: Drassanes.

Pla de la Garsa 🏷 CATALÁN Owner Ignacio Sulle, an antiques collector, has filled his establishment in Barrio Ribera (close to the cathedral) with an intriguing collection of objets d'art. His restaurant boasts one of the city's best wine lists and features a daily array of traditional Catalán favorites. Begin with one of the pâtés, especially the goose, or a confit of duck thighs. You can also order meat and fish pâtés. One surprise is a terrine with black olives and anchovies. For a main course you can order perfectly seasoned beef bourguignon or confit leg of duck with kidney beans. The broad cheese selection is especially bountiful in Catalán goat cheese, including Serrat Gros from the Pyrenees.

Assaonadors 13. www.pladelagarsa.com. ✆ **93-315-24-13.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 9€–24€; fixed-price menus 18€–24€. AE, MC, V. Daily 8pm–1am. Metro: Jaume I.

Tapaç 24 ★★ TAPAS If you sometimes prefer to make an entire meal of small plates, this chef-driven tapas bistro is one of the best bets in Barcelona. It was created by Adrià disciple and elBulli alumnus Carles Abellan of Comerç 24 (p. 461) as his personal homage to traditional tapas bars. First-rate produce, such as purple-tinged artichokes, is transformed into tantalizing treats. You can stop in for breakfast, lunch, or dinner at this nonstop kitchen where the tapas of the day are always changing. If they are available, try the cod omelet with white beans and guindilla peppers, the truffled grilled-cheese sandwich of mozzarella and Iberian ham, or perhaps the silvery spread of anchovies on slices of Requesón cheese. A good lunch dish is a plate of french fries glued together with just-barely-set duck eggs.

Carrer de la Disputació 269. www.tapas24.net. ✆ **93-488-09-77.** Reservations not required. Tapas 4€–15€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–midnight. Metro: Tetuan.

L'Eixample

VERY EXPENSIVE

Gaig ★★★ CONTEMPORARY CATALÁN Media darling Carles Gaig earned his fame by reinventing the Catalán cuisine of his family restaurant in the same way that Juan Marí Arzak (one of his models) helped create the New Basque cuisine at his family restaurant in San Sebastian (p. 605). This 16-table haute restaurant, moved to l'Eixample in 2004, is Gaig's gastronomic venue, and he is widely acclaimed for serving the finest Catalán cuisine of his generation. He keeps the dishes deceptively simple, making a tomato soup with mussels, cockles, and razor clams in an intensely reduced seafood broth, or serving veal sweetbreads with tiny whole potatoes and a mustard sauce. One of his great seasonal specialties is aromatic Bomba rice from the Ebro delta with plump pigeon and porcini mushrooms. His famed canneloni with black truffle announces the arrival of fall. Gaig shops personally every morning at La Boquería. Few dishes last long on the menu, as he is a restless inventor. He used to offer a few traditional Catalán dishes, but shifted them to the menu at Fonda Gaig (p. 468) when he and his wife Fina Navarro opened that traditional venue in 2008.

Aragó 214. www.restaurantgaig.com. ✆ **93-429-10-17.** Reservations required. Main courses 24€–42€; tasting menus 77€–96€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11pm; Sun 9–11pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

La Dama ★★ CATALÁN/FRENCH The great French chef Auguste Escoffier would have felt right at home at La Dama, the unapologetically old-school fine-dining restaurant where chef-director Josep Bullich's cuisine is perfectly syncopated with the Art Nouveau decor. Hop the open-cage elevator (or climb the sinuous stairs) one flight to reach the dining room. Some of the top dishes include loin of venison marinated with five peppers and served with a red-currant sauce, roasted John Dory with tiny squid and black olives, or duck liver on a bed of apples with fig vinegar. They're all elegant, complex dishes and suit the architecture of the building, a 1918 late *modernisme* gem 3 blocks west of the intersection of Avinguda Diagonal and Passeig de Gràcia.

Diagonal 423. www.ladama-restaurant.com. ✆ **93-202-06-86.** Reservations required. Main courses 24€–47€; tasting menus 69€–99€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Metro: Provença.

EXPENSIVE

Can Ravell ★ 🎁 SPANISH/CATALÁN Founded in 1929 by Ignasy Ravell and now run by his son Josep, Can Ravell began as a delicatessen for Barcelona's carriage trade and somehow survived the Franco years by catering to discerning Catalán s. Many shoppers know its delights, but fewer realize that there's a gourmet restaurant above the shop. You reach it by going through a catering kitchen and climbing a spiral staircase. The dining room consists of long marble tables shared by diners. Chef Jesus Benavente adjusts his menu to take advantage of the best in the market during any given season, choosing just four dishes for each course daily from his vast repertoire. In the spring you might find roast lamb with pearl onions, pigs' trotters stuffed with shrimp, and veal steak accompanied by a torchon of foie gras. At all seasons you can get the *salmorejo* (a thicker cousin of gazpacho) topped with lobster and a poached egg. For a party you might consider an entire roasted lamb for the table. The restaurant also boasts a fine wine collection, with more than 10,000 bottles in the cellar, including cavas and champagnes.

Aragó 313. www.ravell.com. ✆ **93-457-51-14.** Reservations required. Main courses 13€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Wed 10am–9pm; Thurs–Sat 10am–11pm; Sun 10am–4pm. Metro: Gerona.

Casa Calvet ★ MEDITERRANEAN One of the most visible and sought-after restaurants of l'Eixample occupies the ground floor of one of the great *modernisme* apartment buildings of Barcelona, a stained-glass and wood-trimmed fantasy designed by Antoni Gaudí in 1899. Menu items are artful and sophisticated, reflecting influences from both Catalunya and France. An array of well-crafted specialties includes grilled scallops with crispy potatoes, leeks, and turnips in asparagus oil, as well as a casserole of rock fish with fresh mussels and prawns. A couple of unusual offerings include sirloin of veal with pumpkin and a mushroom sauce, and duck liver in port wine with a raspberry sauce.

Carrer Casp 48. www.casacalvet.es. ✆ **93-412-40-12.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 26€–29€; tasting menus 40€–70€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Cinc Sentits ★★ MEDITERRANEAN Cinc Sentits in Catalán means five senses, and chef Jordi Artal appeals to all of them. With its cream-colored walls and intimate black banquettes, the restaurant is a chic l'Eixample rendezvous point. For an appetizer, the torchon of foie gras and sugar-glazed beets sprinkled with balsamic vinegar—all atop a wedge of flaky pastry—is a perfect marriage of sweet and savory, with textures that run the gamut from a velvety smoothness to a sharp crunch. The delicately pan-seared lobster is served with white-garlic soup, and crisp duck breast is accentuated with a Priorat wine sauce and accompanied by a sherry-enhanced sweet-potato purée. Everything is served in small plates as part of a tasting menu. Diners who want to exercise some choice can have their way with the excellent wine list.

Aribau 58. www.cincsentits.com. ✆ **93-323-94-90.** Reservations required. Tasting menus 49€–69€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed Aug 8–31. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Coure 🏷 CATALÁN In Gràcia north of l'Eixample proper, Coure offers what might be the best-tasting menu in Barcelona. Chef-owner Albert Ventura prepares his own idiosyncratic take on traditional Catalán cooking, effortlessly incorporating some of the techniques of molecular cuisine without making a big show of it. Expect some surprises, like a salad of thin slices of sweet dehydrated tomato and onion, or a "risotto" of quinoa with Comté cheese. One specialty is *carpaccio de pies de cerdo,* combining pigs' trotters with oysters. He also wins plaudits for his roasted hare stuffed with foie gras, chocolate, and fresh mushrooms. Less challenging choices might be the fresh sea bass with soupy rice, or else fresh tuna flavored with lime and served with smoked eggplant.

Pasaje Marimón 20. ✆ **93-200-75-32.** Main courses 19€–26€; fixed-price lunch 35€; tasting menu 50€. V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Easter week and 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Hospital Clínic.

Jaume de Provença ★★ CATALÁN/FRENCH A few steps from the Estació Central de Barcelona–Sants railway station, at the western end of l'Eixample, is this small, cozy restaurant with rustic decor. Named after its owner and chef, Jaume Bargués, it features modern interpretations of traditional Catalán and southern French cuisine. Both warm and cold appetizers tempt you, including an especially delightful truffle-stuffed ravioli with a mushroom-cream sauce, or a classic Catalán lasagna of spinach and sliced zucchini. Radiantly authentic flavors come out in such dishes as sole stuffed with crab, thyme, and lemon, or else veal filet in a sauce of truffles and Madeira. The finesse of the kitchen is particularly evident in the steak tartare—two mounds, one dressed with foie gras, the other with black truffle.

Provença 88. www.jaumeprovenza.com. ✆ **93-430-00-29.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–33€; fixed-price menus 38€–53€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:45pm and 9–11:15pm; Sun 1–3:45pm. Closed Easter week and Aug. Metro: Entença.

Moo ★★★ MEDITERRANEAN Style and substance meet in this design-centric enclave of sublime food, where steel and slate dead-end into a glassed-in bamboo garden at the chic Hotel Omm. The famed Roca brothers' creativity in the kitchen approaches a kind of culinary genius night after night. The brothers create flavors that actually evoke the aroma of the wine being served, an amazing achievement. For example, salad Verdejo, named after the white Rueda grape, brings out the wine's delicate, grassy flavoring by combining tender lamb's lettuce, fresh fennel and chervil, mango, and rhubarb, with a tantalizing drizzle of dill oil. Their lobster with licorice curry (you read that right) is a celestial dish, playing the unctuous meat off the aromatic anise and ginger. Baby goat is slow-cooked in a rosemary-honey glaze and served on a "cloud" of goat's milk foam. None of the three brothers is on premises during meal service, but the kitchen is under the guidance of their accomplished lieutenant Felip Llufriu.

In the Hotel Omm (p. 499), Rosselló 265. www.hotelomm.es. ✆ **93-445-40-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 21€–27€; fixed-price menus 55€–100€ plus wines. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Metro: Diagonal.

MODERATE

Alkimia ★★ 🎁 CATALÁN If the idea of a "fried egg" as an appetizer sounds a bit dull, try it here in l'Eixample, where chef Jordi Vilà stretches the fundamental boundaries of Catalán cuisine. Begin with that fried egg, which just happens to be a ring of cauliflower cream studded with candied lemon and caramelized onion. The "yolk" is a scoop of unsweetened egg-yolk ice cream with a dollop of Sevruga caviar. Vilà is a deconstructivist who breaks down traditional recipes into components and reinterprets them in creative ways. The rice in the fried egg dish is creamed and ringed with black squid ink. Some of his other imaginative delights could include red mullet in garlic oil with a yogurt and cucumber-apple chutney, monkfish with cauliflower purée and black-olive jam, and glazed veal shank with seasonal mushrooms.

Calle Industria 79. www.alkimia.cat. ✆ **93-207-61-15.** Reservations required. Main dishes 11€–20€; fixed-price menus 38€–84€. DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm. Closed 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Sagrada Família.

Cata 1.81 ★★ 🎁 CATALÁN/TAPAS All dishes here are tapas-size, and seem utterly innovative—until you learn that many of the recipes are based on time-tested Catalán favorites, a testament to the richness of traditional Catalán cuisine. The pigs' trotters with walnuts and fresh figs, accompanied by a scoop of honey ice cream, are an update of the sweetened pigs'-foot flan that has been served in some variation or other in Catalunya for centuries. Another startling but flavor-filled dish is squid stuffed with minced pork and served with an almond-flavored chocolate sauce. A savory rice dish is served with fresh asparagus and black truffles, and ravioli come stuffed with codfish and minced smoked ham. A Catalán favorite, cannelloni, is presented in a truffle-studded béchamel sauce. Three squares of fresh and succulent rare tuna are crowned with savory mustard. The restaurant is chiefly a tapas bar celebrated for both its extraordinary wine list and its cuisine.

Calle Valencia 181. www.cata181.com. ✆ **93-323-68-18.** Reservations required. Tasting menu 28€ for 9 dishes, 45€ for 11 dishes; tapas 4.75€–8€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Fri 1pm–midnight; Sat 8pm–12:30am. Closed 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia or Hospital Clínic.

El Caballito Blanco SEAFOOD/INTERNATIONAL "The Little White Horse" is an old-time Barcelona seafood standby popular with locals. The fluorescent-lit dining area does not offer much atmosphere, but the food is good, varied, and relatively inexpensive (unless you order lobster or other expensive shellfish). Located in the Passeig de Gràcia area, the restaurant features a huge selection, including monkfish, mussels marinara, and shrimp with garlic. If you don't want fish, try the grilled lamb cutlets. Several different pâtés and salads are offered. There's a bar to the left of the dining area.

Mallorca 196. ✆ **93-453-10-33.** Main courses 18€–29€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:45pm and 9–10:45pm; Sun 1–3:45pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Hospital Clínic or Diagonal.

Fonda Gaig ★ CATALÁN Complementing the personalized, avant-garde cuisine of Restaurante Gaig (p. 501), this larger and simpler restaurant is Carles Gaig's ode to traditional Catalán home cooking. That's not to say that the dishes lack complexity—far from it. His cod fritters, for example, are presented inside crispy rilletes. And his cannelloni are described as his grandmother Maria's recipe—virtually identical to those at Restaurante Gaig but minus the black truffle. His long braise of pig's ear and snout yields a thick, meaty stew that is the very definition of Catalán comfort food.

Córcega 200. www.fondagaig.com. ☎ **93-453-20-20.** Reservations suggested. Main courses 16€–28€; tasting menu 45€–55€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11pm; Sun 9–11pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Gresca ★★ 🎁 CATALÁN This small restaurant is home base for chef Rafa Penya, who was (like so many terrific Catalán chefs) a protégé of Ferran Adrià. Rather than offer performance cuisine, Penya prefers to make innovative food available at a terrific price. A youthful crowd of gourmets on a budget come for his often surprising taste combinations, such as fresh calves' liver with plantains and licorice. The octopus carpaccio is a surefire winner, as is the black *botifarra,* a regional sausage popular in Catalunya, served here with fried potatoes. Sometimes his plates are straight from grandmother's recipe box, but delicious nonetheless: beef cheeks braised in Rioja wine, or large mushrooms stuffed with partridge meat.

Carrer Provenza 230. www.gresca.net. ☎ **93-451-61-93.** Reservations required. Main courses 13€–22€; fixed-price lunch menu 19€; dinner tasting menu 50€. MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm; Sat 8:30–11pm. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya or Hospital Clínic.

Hisop ★★ 🎁 CATALÁN/INTERNATIONAL On the northern tier of l'Eixample, Oriol Ivern and Guillem Pla are in the vanguard of gifted chefs revolutionizing Spanish—and European—cuisine. They dare, dare, and dare some more. The decor is hip, stylish, minimalist, and dominated by a sleek red-and-black gloss. Their philosophy is to take the recipes of the past and give them an entirely contemporary interpretation. Their signature dish is a rosy pigeon breast served with pear purée and tomato confit. The pigeon comes with different peppers (ranging from Jamaican to Szechuan) and different salts (ranging from red to *fleur de sel*). You more or less get to season to taste. Duck liver comes with the unusual accompaniments of beets and mangoes. Fresh scallops are tossed with pumpkin flowers, and John Dory appears on your platter with truffles. Locally caught squid is made even more delectable with a green pesto made from wild arugula and a white salsify purée. Drizzled on this is an orange-flavored sweet-pepper oil. And who makes a better chocolate Madeleine soaked in rose syrup and served with strawberry-pepper ice cream?

Pasaje Marimon 9. www.hisop.com. ☎ **93-241-32-33.** Reservations required. Main courses 21€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11pm; Sat 9–11pm. Closed 1 week in Aug. Metro: Hospital Clínic.

L'Olive ★ CATALÁN/MEDITERRANEAN Here the cook, the cuisine, and the restaurant are one: Chef Josep Olive cooks up olive-based dishes in the restaurant called Olive. You won't be disappointed by anything on the menu, especially *bacalla llauna* (raw salt cod), *filet de vedella al vi negre al forn* (baked veal filets in a red-wine sauce), or *salsa maigret* of duck with strawberry sauce. Monkfish flavored with roasted garlic is always a palate pleaser. You can finish with *crema catalána* (a flan) or one of the delicious Catalán pastries. The modern Catalán style building has impeccably polished floors and tables topped with marble. There are sections on both floors where it's possible to have some privacy, and overall the feeling is one of elegance with a touch of intimacy.

Balmes 47 (corner of Concéjo de Ciento). www.rte-olive.com. ✆ **93-452-19-90.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–23€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 8:30pm–midnight. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Rosalert ★ CATALÁN/SEAFOOD At the corner of Carrer Napols close to La Sagrada Família, this restaurant has been the domain of Jordi Alert for more than 4 decades. He specializes in *comida de mar a la plancha,* or grilled seafood. His seafood and crustaceans (there is no more impressive glass tank of live shellfish in Barcelona) are grilled on a heated iron plate without any additives. You choose your meal, which is extracted with a net from that tank and thrown on the grill. Of course, you find all the typical offerings, such as tiny octopus, succulent mussels, fat shrimp, squid, fresh oysters, and langoustines. If you're daring, you can order such unusual seafood as *dátiles* ("dates" in English), a delicious shellfish whose shape resembles a date. Begin with one of the freshly made tapas, such as salt cod in vinaigrette or broad beans laced with garlic and virgin olive oil. Your best bet might be the *parrillada,* assorted grilled fish and shellfish. One of the best offerings is turbot cooked on the grill with potatoes and fresh mushrooms.

Av. Diagonal 301. ✆ **93-207-10-19.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–50€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–5pm and 8pm–2am; Sun noon–5pm. Closed 10 days in Jan and Aug. Metro: Verdaguer/Sagrada Família.

INEXPENSIVE

La Dentellière ★ 🎁 MEDITERRANEAN Evelyne Ramelot, the French writer who owns this charming little bistro, has modeled it after some of the welcoming boites of provincial France. After an aperitif at the sophisticated cocktail bar, you can order from an imaginative menu that might include a lasagna of strips of salt cod, peppers, and tomato sauce; or a delectable carpaccio of filet of beef with pistachios, lemon juice, vinaigrette, and Parmesan cheese. Like many good bargain dining spots, the menu also features a lot of pastas and rice dishes. Unlike most others, it also offers three fondues: a classic, a blue-cheese version, and a goat-cheese version. The all-Spanish wine list is particularly imaginative, mining some of the less tapped regions and offering bottles for bargain prices.

Ample 165. www.ladentellierebcn.com. ✆ **93-319-68-21.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–16€; fixed-price dinner 17€. MC, V. Daily 7:30pm–midnight. Metro: Diagonal or Jaume I.

Tragaluz ★ MEDITERRANEAN Named after the turn-of-the-20th-century *modernisme* building where it's located, this well-respected restaurant offers three very contemporary dining rooms on separate floors. On the ground floor you can choose from the oyster bar (TragaFish) or the sushi and chargrilled *kusiyaki* of El Japonés sushi bar. Upstairs are the dining rooms—a conventional one on the level above the street, and a lounge-style room with fireplaces and sofas on the top floor for more informal dining or grabbing a drink after dinner. The menu is market driven. Depending on the month of your visit, you might find terrine of duck liver, Santurce-style hake (with garlic and herbs), filet of sole stuffed with red peppers, or beef tenderloin in a Rioja-wine sauce. One of the best desserts is a semisoft slice of deliberately underbaked chocolate cake. Tragaluz has been a popular favorite since 1990 and is part of the same restaurant group as Moo (p. 466).

Pasaje Concepción 5, l'Eixample. www.grupotragaluz.com. ✆ **93-487-06-21.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–29€; fixed-price menu 22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4pm; 8:30pm–midnight. Metro: Diagonal or Provença.

Norte Diagonal

VERY EXPENSIVE

Botafumeiro ★★ SEAFOOD Although the competition is strong, this classic *marisquería* consistently puts some of Barcelona's finest seafood on the table in a glittering, old-world atmosphere. Much of the allure comes from the attention of the white-jacketed staff. If it swims, it's served here. Menu items include fresh seafood prepared in a glistening, modern kitchen partly visible from the dining room. The establishment prides itself on its fresh and saltwater fish, clams, mussels, lobster, crayfish, scallops, and several varieties of crustaceans that you may have never seen before. The restaurant is especially proud of its *percebes,* or goose barnacles, a delicacy that brings a far higher price than lobster. Stored live in holding tanks or in enormous crates near the entrance, many of the creatures are flown in daily from Galicia, where owner Moncho Neira hails from. With 100 or so fish dishes, the menu lists only a handful of meat dishes, including three kinds of steak, veal, and a traditional version of pork with turnips. The wine list offers a wide array of cavas from Catalunya and terrific *albariños* from the Rias Baixas in Galicia.

Gran de Gràcia 81. www.botafumeiro.es. ✆ **93-218-42-30.** Reservations recommended for dining rooms. Main courses 26€–50€; *menú degustación* 80€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1pm–1am. Metro: Fontana.

Dos Cielos ★★★ MEDITERRANEAN This gourmet citadel of chefs Sergio and Javier Torres sits high above Barcelona on the 24th floor of the Hotel Meliá. What you get here is rich, elegant Mediterranean cuisine with the same kind of innovative touch that Javier brought as head chef under Santi Santimaria at the famed Can Fabes (p. 473). The selection of starters, both hot and cold, is as celestial as the lofty setting, including foie gras ravioli, blue lobster flavored with citrus, and summer truffles with spinach and mushrooms. For a main, select one of their creamy rice dishes, such as one with pigeon and black olives, or fish and meat selections, including grilled wild turbot or suckling kid shoulder. One particularly intensely flavored specialty is wild hare, a confit of tender meat beneath an inky reduction sauce enriched with rabbit blood. For dessert, you might try a sunny layering of citrus in multiple forms, including cream, fruit, cake, and mousse.

In the Hotel Meliá, Diagonal Pere IV. www.doscielos.com. ✆ **93-367-20-70.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 27€–45€; tasting menu 120€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Thurs 1–4pm and 8–11pm; Fri–Sat 1–4pm and 8–11:30pm.

Lasarte ★★★ BASQUE The brilliant Basque chef Martín Berasategui has been making quite a stir all over Spain by branching out from his home turf to bring his version of contemporary Basque cuisine to hotel restaurants. Part of his success is hiring brilliant *chefs de cuisine*—in this case Antonio Sáez, who was majordomo at the original Berasategui in the town of Lasarte. The restaurant is low key yet elegant, inspired by the prevalent modernist style of the city. Berasategui's dishes will keep diners' taste buds twitching with curiosity—and pleasure. Dishes often change daily, and Sáez has the master's touch—you wouldn't believe that roasted sole with stewed lentils and potatoes with red pepper could taste so good. The restaurant prepares a roasted wood pigeon that sets the bar for other chefs. Consider starting with foie gras and smoked eel, or try the amusing scallop sandwich with creamy raw celery. If the price is too high, consider eating in his adjoining annex, **Loidi,** where a Berasategui-inspired four-course fixed-price menu of traditional Basque dishes goes for only 39€.

In the Hotel Condes de Barcelona, Mallorca 259. www.restaurantlasarte.com. ☎ **93-445-00-00.** Reservations required. Main dishes 41€–52€; luncheon menu 75€; tasting dinner menu 120€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Provença.

EXPENSIVE

Gorría ★ 🎁 BASQUE/NAVARRESE If you're a devotee of the cookery of both Navarra and the coastal Basque Country in northern Spain, then head for this quite wonderful restaurant lying only 200m (656 ft.) from La Sagrada Família and just 50m (164 ft.) from Plaza de Toros (the bullring). Javier Gorría learned to cook from his famous father, the chef Fermin Gorría, and Javier is as good as his old man. At this location in l'Eixample, Gorría holds forth nightly, pampering his regular clientele of expats from Navarra and the Basque Country with memories of home. No dish is finer than the herb-flavored baby lamb baked in a wood-fired oven. The classic Basque dish, hake, comes in a garlic-laced green-herb sauce with fresh mussels and perfectly cooked asparagus on the side. His grilled turbot is fresh and straightforward, perfection itself with its flavoring of garlic, virgin olive oil, and a dash of vinegar. Braised pork also emerges from the wood-fired oven.

Diputación 421, l'Eixample. www.restaurantegorria.com. ☎ **93-245-11-64.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–33€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon 11am–3:30pm; Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Easter and Aug. Metro: Monumental.

Moll de la Fusta & La Barceloneta

EXPENSIVE

Can Costa ★ SEAFOOD This is one of the oldest seafood restaurants in this seafaring town. Established in the late 1920s, it has two busy dining rooms, a practiced staff, and an outdoor terrace, although a warehouse blocks the view of the harbor. Fresh seafood prepared according to traditional recipes rules the menu. It includes the best baby squid in town—sautéed in a flash so that it has a nearly grilled flavor, almost never overcooked or rubbery. A long-standing chef's specialty is *fideuà de peix,* a relative of the classic Valencian shellfish paella, with noodles instead of rice. The kitchen also makes a "black" version colored and flavored with squid ink. Other temptations on the menu include grilled lobster with lemon sauce, baked monkfish, and grilled king prawns. Desserts are made fresh daily.

Passeig Don Joan de Borbò 70. www.cancosta.com. ☎ **93-221-59-03.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–32€. MC, V. Daily 12:30–4pm; Thurs–Tues 8–11:30pm. Metro: Barceloneta.

7 Portes ★ CATALÁN/SEAFOOD This is a lunchtime favorite for businesspeople (the Stock Exchange is across the way), and an evening favorite for many knowledgeable diners who have made it their preferred restaurant in Catalunya. Festive and elegant, it's been going since 1836, making it one of the oldest restaurants in Barcelona. Regional dishes include fresh herring with onions and potatoes, a different paella daily (sometimes with shellfish, for example, often with rabbit), and a wide array of fresh fish. You might order succulent oysters, or sample an herb-laden stew of black beans with pork or of white beans with sausage. The farmhouse chicken roasted with mushrooms and Moscatel wine sauce has been a standby since the 19th century. Portions are enormous. The restaurant's name means "Seven Doors," and it really does have seven doors. Waiters wear the long white aprons of the Belle Epoque era.

Passeig d'Isabel II, no. 14. www.7portes.com. ☎ **93-319-30-33.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1pm–1am. Metro: Barceloneta.

MODERATE

Agua MEDITERRANEAN/ITALIAN It bustles, it's hip, and it serves well-prepared fish and shellfish in a hypermodern setting overlooking the beach. A terrace beckons anyone who wants an in-your-face view of the water, and if you sit out (preferably with wraparound sunglasses and a head scarf), you can pretend that you're trying not to be recognized. If the wind is blowing with a bit too much chill, retreat into the big-windowed blue-and-yellow dining room. Here, amid display cases showing the catch of the day, you can order heaping portions of meats and fish to be grilled over an open charcoal fire. Examples include excellent grilled chicken, fish, shrimp, crayfish, and an especially succulent stuffed squid. Most of them are served with as little culinary fanfare and as few sauces as possible, allowing the freshness and flavor of the raw ingredients to shine through the chargrilled coatings. Risottos, some of them studded with fresh clams and herbs, are usually winners, with many versions suitable for vegetarians.

Passeig Marítim de la Barceloneta 30 (Port Marítim). www.grupotragaluz.com. ☎ **93-225-12-72.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 10€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Sat–Sun 1–4:30pm and 8pm–12:30am. Metro: Ciutadella.

Cal Pep ★★ CATALÁN One of the most celebrated casual dining spots in Barcelona, Cal Pep lies on a postage-stamp square close to the Picasso Museum. A slice of local life, it's generally packed, and the food is some of the tastiest in the Ciutat Vella (Old City). There's actually a real Pep, and he's a great host, going around to make sure that everybody is one happy family. At the back is a small dining room, but most patrons like to occupy one of the counter seats up front. A selection of perfectly cooked dishes—all a little big to be called tapas and too small to be *raciones*—emerges from the kitchen in the back. They are, nonetheless, meant for sharing. Try the fried artichokes or the mixed medley of seafood that includes small sardines. Tiny clams come swimming in a well-seasoned broth given extra spice by a sprinkling of hot peppers. A delectable tuna dish comes with a sesame sauce, and fresh salmon is flavored with basil.

Plaça des les Olles 8. www.calpep.com. ☎ **93-310-79-61.** Reservations for groups of 4–20 only. Main courses 14€–28€. AE, MC, V. Mon 8–11:30pm; Tues–Fri 1–4pm and 8–11:30pm; Sat 1–4pm. Closed Aug. Metro: Barceloneta or Jaume I.

Can Majó ★ SEAFOOD Located close to the harbor, this is one of the best seafood restaurants in Barcelona. In summer, its terrace tables are some of the most desirable in the port. The decoration inside is in rustic-tavern style. Art lines the walls, and the staff exudes a hospitable, friendly aura as they give excellent, if sometimes rushed, service. The food plows fairly familiar ground, but when it's good, it can be very good indeed. The fish is very fresh—just brought in that morning. Founded in 1968, the restaurant serves some of the area's best *sopa de pescado y marisco* (fish and shellfish soup), and a particularly excellent version of *zarzuela,* a related dish that might be called a Catalán bouillabaisse without all the uptight rules. The sautéed squid is a heavenly meal in itself. *Bacalao* (rehydrated salt cod) appears in a savory green sauce with baby clams still in their shells. The paellas are as good as those served in the famed restaurants of Valencia, and the lobster bouillabaisse is extremely gratifying.

Almirall Aixada 23, Barceloneta. ☎ **93-221-54-55.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8–11:30pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Metro: Barceloneta.

Can Solé ★ CATALÁN/SEAFOOD In Barceloneta at the harbor, Can Solé still honors the traditions of this former fishing village. While many seafood joints here are fish traps set for tourists and baited with paella, this classic restaurant, founded in 1903, is authentic and delivers good value. The decor is rustic and a bit raffish, with wine barrels, lots of noise, and excellent food. Begin with the sweet tiny clams or the cod cakes, or perhaps fried small octopus legs or even cabbage hearts with tuna fish. Little langoustines are a perennial (if expensive) favorite. Everything is aromatically perfumed with fresh garlic. Some great old-fashioned fish dishes survive here, like fried cod and onions with currants—a Catalán version of a Saracen/Moorish North African fish dish. Desserts are good, so save room for them, especially the orange pudding and the praline ice cream. Most main courses are on the low end of the price range.

Carrer Sant Carles 4. www.restaurantcansole.com. ☎ **93-221-50-12.** Reservations required. Main courses 12€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1:30–4pm. Closed 2 weeks Aug. Metro: Barceloneta.

On the Outskirts

VERY EXPENSIVE

Can Fabes ★★★ MEDITERRANEAN/INTERNATIONAL Can Fabes, one of the greatest restaurants of Spain, persists in loving memory of its founding chef, Santi Santamaría. If you don't mind the 30-minute (52km/32-mile) drive or the 45-minute train ride from Barcelona, you will be transported to a gourmet citadel housed in a 3-century-old building in the center of the Catalán village of Sant Celoni, population 1,700. Founded in 1981, the restaurant has always shrugged off press acclaim, continuing to show discipline and craftsmanship despite all the raves. Xavier Pellicer, who runs the kitchen, does not let a single platter reach the dining room without his keen-eyed approval. This Michelin two-star restaurant (it lost a star when Santamaría died in 2011) is run with exquisite care and dedication. The restaurant is refined and elegant, yet retains a rustic atmosphere. A heavenly concoction is spicy foie gras with Sauterne and a coulis of sweet red and green peppers. Two different preparations of crayfish, each one a delight, come both raw and cooked. Roast pigeon is prepared according to the season and the "mood of the chef." For dessert, there's nothing finer than the Festival de Chocolate.

Sant Joan 6, Sant Celoni. www.canfabes.com. ☎ **93-867-28-51.** Reservations required. Main courses 45€–65€; fixed-price 10-course menus 140€–228€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Sun 1:30–3:30pm; Wed–Sat 8:30–10:30pm. Closed Jan 2–31. Take any France-bound RENFE train from the Passeig de Gràcia station, and disembark at Sant Celoni.

Our Favorite Tascas

The bars listed below are known for their tapas; for more recommendations, see “Bars & Pubs,” p. 488.

Alt Heidelberg GERMAN/TAPAS A Barcelona institution since the 1930s, Alt Heidelberg serves German beer on tap, a good selection of German sausages, and Spanish tapas. You can also order full meals—sauerkraut garni is a specialty.

Ronda Universitat 5. ✆ **93-318-10-32.** Tapas 3€–7€; combination plates 8€–14€. MC, V. Daily 8:30am–1:45am. Metro: Universitat.

Bar del Pi TAPAS One of the most famous bars in the Barri Gòtic, this establishment is midway between two medieval squares opening onto the church of Pi. Tapas are limited; most visitors come to drink coffee, beer, or wine, or to eat pastries. You can sit inside, at one of the cramped bentwood tables, or stand at the crowded bar. In warm weather, take a table beneath the single plane tree on the landmark square. The plaza usually draws an interesting group of young bohemian sorts and travelers.

Plaça Sant Josep Oriol 1. www.bardelpi.com. ✆ **93-302-21-23.** Tapas 2€–8€. MC, V. Tues–Fri 9am–11pm; Sat 9:30am–11pm; Sun 10am–10pm (closed Sun July–Aug). Closed mid-Jan to mid-Feb. Metro: Liceu.

Bar Turó TAPAS In an affluent residential neighborhood north of the Ciutat Vella (Old City), Bar Turó serves some terrific upscale tapas in a posh room that fronts on Parc Turó. In summer you can sit outside or retreat to the narrow confines of the bar. You select from about 20 kinds of tapas, including fried squid, serrano ham, small casseroles of veal kidneys, crab sticks with beans, and skewers of lamb or chicken.

Tenor Viñas 1. ✆ **93-200-69-53.** Tapas 2€–10€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–midnight; Sun 10am–4pm. Metro: Hospital Clínic.

Bodegueta TAPAS Founded in 1942, this old wine tavern specializes in Catalán sausage. Wash it down with an inexpensive Spanish wine. The unpretentious spot also makes terrific little ham croquettes. Beer costs 1.50€; wine goes for 1.80€.

A Wine Taster’s Secret Address

It doesn’t get much better in Barcelona than an afternoon spent on the terrace of **La Vinya del Senyor ★★**, Plaça Santa María 5 (✆ **93-310-33-79**), taking in the glorious Gothic facade of the church of Santa María del Mar. Imagine 13 Priorats, 31 Riojas, and more than a dozen vintages of the legendary Vega Sicilia. In all, there are more than 300 wines and selected cavas, sherries, and Moscatels at this bar, and the list is constantly rotated so you can always expect a surprise on the *carte.* If you don’t want a bottle, you’ll find some two dozen wines offered by the glass, including a sublime 1994 Jané Ventura cabernet sauvignon. Tantalizing tapas are served, including walnut rolls drizzled in olive oil, cured Iberian ham, and French cheese. They also specialize in small Catalán flatbreads known as *coca.* Order one with candied red peppers to accompany a hearty red. Tapas cost from 3€ to 10€. Amex, DC, MC, and V are accepted. Hours are Sunday to Thursday from noon to 1:30am and Friday and Saturday until 2am (Metro: Jaume I or Barceloneta).

Rambla de Catalunya 100. ✆ **93-215-48-94.** Tapas 4€–16€. V. Mon–Sat 7am–1:45am; Sun 6:30pm–1:15am. Metro: Diagonal.

Casa Alfonso TAPAS Spaniards love their ham, which comes in many forms. The best of the best is *jamón ibérico de bellota,* the only one sold at this traditional establishment. Entire hams hang from steel braces. They're taken down, carved, and trimmed before you into paper-thin slices. This particular form of cured ham, generically called *jamón serrano,* comes from pigs fed acorns in northern Huelva province in deepest Andalucía next to the Portuguese border. Specifically, it comes from Jabugo and can be hard to find in Catalunya, so enjoy it while you can.

Roger de Llúria 6. www.casaalfonso.com. ✆ **93-301-97-83.** Tapas 6€–13€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Tues 9am–midnight; Wed–Sat 9am–1am. Metro: Urquinaona.

Casa Tejada TAPAS Covered with rough stucco and decorated with hanging hams, Casa Tejada (established in 1964) offers terrific tapas and functions as the neighborhood rival to Bar Turó (see above). Arranged behind a glass display case, the small plates include such dishes as marinated fresh tuna, German-style potato salad, serrano ham, and five preparations of squid (including one that's stuffed). For variety, quantity, and quality, this place is hard to beat. There's outdoor dining in summer.

Tenor Viñas 3. ✆ **93-200-73-41.** Tapas 3€–21€. MC, V. Daily 9am–1:30am. Metro: Muntaner or Hospital Clínic.

El Rey de la Gamba 2 SHELLFISH "The King of Prawns" could also be called the House of Mussels, because it sells even more of that shellfish. In the 18th-century fishing village of Barceloneta, this place packs them in, especially on weekends. A wide array of seafood accompanies cured ham—a traditional combination that seems intended to doubly flaunt the dietetic prohibitions of Judaism and Islam.

Moll de Mestral 23–25. www.elreydelagamba.com. ✆ **93-221-00-12.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 12€–27€; fixed-price menus 26€–37€. MC, V. Daily 11am–2am. Metro: Calle Marina or Ciutadella.

Lolita Taperia ★★ TAPAS This is the most popular tapas bar in Barcelona—a contemporary remake of old favorite Bar Inopia. Local hipsters crowd into this place at night, and it's standing-room only. In the Sant Antoni sector of town, the chef serves excellent *patatas bravas* (fried potatoes with aioli laced with hot paprika), and his garlic-laced chicken wings are always a hit. Most of the tapas are traditional, whether manzanilla olives stuffed with anchovies, a tangy sardine sandwich, or an unusually garlicky version of potato salad with tuna. Wine starts around 3€ a glass, and Saturday afternoons feature a selection of inexpensive vermouths. At midnight, the kitchen closes but the bar serves for several more hours as DJs spin some tunes.

Carrer Tamarit 104. www.lolitataperia.com. ✆ **93-424-52-31.** Tapas 2.50€–14€. MC, V. Tues–Fri 7pm–midnight; Sat 1–3pm and 7pm–midnight. Metro: Poble Sec.

Quimet & Quimet ★ TAPAS/CHEESE This is a great tapas bar, especially for cheese—it offers the finest selection in Barcelona. Built at the turn of the 20th century, this tavern in Poble Sec is still run by the fifth generation of Quimets. Their wine cellar is one of the best stocked of any tapas bar, and their cheese selection is varied. For a tasting, order four at a time—perhaps a suite that

Chocolate at a Tapas Bar?

We always come back to Barcelona for a slice of the best chocolate cake in the world. Master *pâtissier* Carles Mampel won the Lyon Press Award for the best chocolate cake in 2005, and he is still serving that classic recipe. Enjoy a slice at **bubó & bubó Bar ★★**, at Caputxes 10 (www.bubo.es; ✆ **93-268-72-24**), which is not only the greatest confectioner in Barcelona but also a new-wave tapas bar near Basílica Santa María del Mar in the heart of El Born. Even if you don't like chocolate, you can sample his carrot jelly swirled with coconut mousse and served with litchi ice cream topped with a hazelnut crunch. Of course, there are glittering macaroons and chocolate confections, even sugar-encrusted marshmallow bonbons. We bit into one of these chocolate bonbons to discover it was a curious savory flavor like tomato bread. They cost 1€ each. Adjoining is the minimalist bubó Bar, which we think serves the some of the best tapas in town, including a *tortilla española* (potato omelet) stuck on a fanciful straw. Tapas average 2€ to 4€, unless you want something expensive and fancy. For dessert, return to the pastry shop and ask them for a takeout box containing the best and most delicate Sacher torte in town. Find a bench somewhere and watch city life pass you by.

includes Nevat, a tangy goat cheese; Cabrales, an intense Spanish blue; Zamorano, a hardy, nutty sheep's-milk cheese; and *torta del Casar,* a soft, creamy farm cheese. Of course, you can order other delights such as mussels with tomato confit and caviar, razor clams, and even sturgeon. Q&Q also makes as many a 100 different *montaditos* (small sandwiches) every night.

Poeta Cabanyes 25. ✆ **93-442-31-42.** Tapas 3€–14€. MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–4:30pm and 7–10:30pm; Sat noon–4pm. Metro: Paral.lel.

SHOPPING

For fashion and style, Barcelonans no longer look to Paris and certainly not to Madrid. They believe, with some justification, that Catalán design is Europe's cutting edge. *Moda joven* (young fashion) is all the rage.

If your time and budget are limited, you may want to patronize Barcelona's major department store, **El Corte Inglés,** for an overview of Catalán merchandise at reasonable prices. Barcelona is filled with boutiques, but clothing is expensive, even though the city has been a textile center for centuries.

Markets (p. 480) are very popular and suitable places to search for good buys.

The Barcelona Shopping Scene

If you're a window-shopper, stroll along the **Passeig de Gràcia** from the Avinguda Diagonal to the Plaça de Catalunya. Along the way, you'll see some of the most elegant and expensive shops in Barcelona, plus an assortment of splendid turn-of-the-20th-century buildings and cafes, many with outdoor tables. Another prime spot is **La Rambla de Catalunya** (upper end of Les Rambles).

Yet another shopping destination is the **Mercat de la Boqueria ★★★**, Rambla 91 (no phone), near Carrer del Carme. Here you'll see a wide array of straw bags and regional products, along with artfully displayed food sold to home

CHANEL
CHANEL
DIESEL

Along the Passeig de Gràcia.

cooks and restaurants alike: fruits, vegetables, breads, cheeses, meats, and fish. Vendors sell their wares Monday to Saturday 8am to 8pm. Similarly, in La Ribera, the **Mercat de Santa Caterina,** Av. Francesc Cambó 16 (www.mercatsantacaterina.net), has a somewhat smaller selection of food vendors (only 21 butchers, for example, and only 17 fishmongers). Hours at Santa Caterina are somewhat briefer, ending at 2pm on Mondays, and at 2:30pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

In the **Old Quarter,** not far from Plaça de Catalunya, the principal shopping streets are all five of Les Rambles, plus Carrer del Pi, Carrer de la Palla, and Avinguda Portal de l'Angel, to cite some major thoroughfares. Moving north in **l'Eixample,** you'll walk through Passeig de Catalunya, Passeig de Gràcia, and Ramble de Catalunya. Even farther north, **Avinguda Diagonal** is a major shopping boulevard. Other prominent shopping streets include Bori i Fontesta, Vía Augusta, Carrer Muntaner, Travessera de Gràcia, and Carrer de Balmes.

In general, shopping hours are Monday to Saturday 9am to 8pm. Smaller shops may close from 1:30 to 4pm.

Watch for sales (*rebajas* in Spanish, *rebaixes* in Catalán) in mid-January, late July, and August. Stores getting rid of their winter or summer stock often offer heavy discounts.

Shopping A to Z

Prices in Barcelona tend to be slightly lower than in London, Paris, and Rome.

You'll find stylish, attractively designed **clothing** and **shoes. Decorative objects** are often good buys. In the city of Miró, Tàpies, and Picasso, **art** is a major business and the reason for visits by gallery owners from around the world. You'll find dozens of galleries, especially in the Barri Gòtic and around the Picasso Museum. Barcelona is also noted for its **flea markets,** where good purchases are always available if you search hard enough.

Antiques abound, but rising prices have put many of them beyond the means of the average shopper. However, the list below includes some shops where you can at least look. Most shoppers from abroad settle happily for **handicrafts**, and the city is rich in offerings ranging from pottery to handmade furniture. Barcelona has been in the business of creating and designing **jewelry** since the 17th century, and its offerings and prices are of the widest possible range. The city is noted for contemporary studio jewelry.

What follows is a very limited selection of some of the hundreds of shops in Barcelona.

ANTIQUES

Artur Ramón Art ★★ One of the finest antiques and art dealers in Barcelona can be found at this three-level emporium. Set on a narrow flagstone-covered street near Plaça del Pi (the center of the antiques district), it stands opposite a tiny square, the Placeta al Carrer de la Palla. The store, which has been operated by four generations of men named Artur Ramón, also has branches nearby and is known for its 19th- and 20th-century painting, sculpture, drawings and engravings, and 18th- and 19th-century decorative arts and objets d'art, along with rare ceramics, porcelain, and glassware. Prices are high, befitting objects of quality and lasting value. It's open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 1:30pm. Palla 25. www.arturamon.com. ✆ **93-302-59-70.** Metro: Jaume I.

Bulevard dels Antiquaris ★★ This 70-unit complex adjacent to one of the town's most aristocratic avenues has a huge collection of art and antiques assembled in a series of boutiques. There's a cafe/bar on the upper level. Hours are Monday to Saturday 10:30am to 8:30pm (closed Sat July–Aug). Some boutiques keep shorter hours. Passeig de Gràcia 55–57. www.bulevarddelsantiquaris.com. ✆ **93-215-44-99.** Metro: Passeig de Gràcia. Bus: 22, 24, or 26.

BOOKS

LAIE Although the principal offerings are in Castilian and Catalán, the best selection of English-language books, including travel maps and guides, is at LAIE, a block from the Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 9pm, Saturday from 10:30am to 9pm. The bookshop has an upstairs cafe with international newspapers and a little terrace. It serves breakfast, lunch (salad bar), and dinner. The cafe is open Monday from 9am to 9pm and Tuesday to Saturday from 9am to 1am. The shop schedules cultural events, including art exhibits and literary presentations. Pau Claris 85. www.laie.es. ✆ **93-302-73-10.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya or Urquinaona. Bus: 22 or 28.

CHOCOLATES

Cacao Sampaka ★★ Albert Adrià, the brother of Ferran Adrià (hailed by some as the world's greatest chef), was briefly Spain's most famous chocolatier after he co-founded this highly successful chain of innovative chocolate shops. The chocolates are among Spain's most acclaimed. Of course, you expect chocolate truffles, but not such imaginative concoctions as the puddinglike *chocolat a la taza,* made with cinnamon-flecked milk and even speckles of hot pepper. Sampaka uses some of the finest sweetmeats on the market, including liqueurs and digestives, even fresh flowers and herbs. On-site is a bar/cafe where you can order hot, creamy chocolate along with rich pastries and excellent sandwiches. Hours are Monday to Saturday 9am to 9:15pm. Consell de Cent 292. www.cacaosampaka.com. ✆ **93-272-08-33.** Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

DEPARTMENT STORES

El Corte Inglés ★ One of the local representatives of the largest and most glamorous department store chain in Spain, this branch sells a wide variety of merchandise. It ranges from Spanish handicrafts to high-fashion items, from Catalán music to food. The store has restaurants and cafes and offers consumer-related services, such as a travel agent. One department will mail your purchases home. Not only that, but you can have shoes reheeled, your hair cut or colored, your nails manicured, and your hunger and thirst slaked (at the rooftop cafe). It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 10pm. El Corte Inglés has other Barcelona locations: Av. Diagonal 617–619 (✆ **93-366-71-00;** Metro: María Cristina) and Av. Diagonal 471 (✆ **93-493-48-00;** Metro: Hospital Clínic). Plaça de Catalunya 14. www.elcorteingles.es. ✆ **93-306-38-00.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

DESIGNER HOUSEWARES

Galerías Vinçon ★★ Fernando Amat's Vinçon is the best store of its kind in the city, with 10,000 products—everything from household items to the finest in Spanish contemporary furnishings. Its mission is to purvey good design, period. Housed in the former home of artist Ramón Casas—a contemporary of Picasso's during his Barcelona stint—the showroom is filled with the best Spain has. The always-creative window displays alone are worth the trek: Expect *anything*. It is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8:30pm. Passeig de Gràcia 96. www.vincon.com. ✆ **93-215-60-50.** Metro: Diagonal.

FABRICS & WEAVINGS

Coses de Casa Appealing fabrics and weavings are displayed in this 19th-century store, called simply "Household Items." Many are hand-woven in Mallorca, their boldly geometric patterns inspired by Arabic motifs of centuries ago. The fabric, for the most part, is 50% cotton, 50% linen; much of it would make excellent upholstery material. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8pm, Saturday from 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. Plaça de Sant Josep Oriol 5. www.cosesdecasa.com. ✆ **93-302-73-28.** Metro: Jaume I or Eliceo.

FASHION

Adolfo Domínguez ★ This shop, one of many outlets spread across Spain and Europe, displays fashion that has earned for the store the appellation "the Spanish Armani." There's one big difference: Domínguez's suits for both women and men, unlike Armani's, are designed for people with hips who don't need excessive shoulder pads. They cover all ages at their stores, including the youth market. A Domínguez suit is typically rendered in earth tones with an unfussy, full cut. Hours are Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8:30pm. Passeig de Gràcia 32. www.adolfodominguez.com. ✆ **93-487-41-70.** Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

Groc ★ One of the most stylish shops in Barcelona, Groc is expensive but filled with high-quality men's and women's apparel made from the finest natural fibers. The men's store is downstairs, the women's store one flight up. Expect the heavily advertised international prestige labels, such as Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, and Antonio Miró (who happens to choose Groc's fashions). It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8:30pm. Rambla de Catalunya 100. ✆ **93-215-77-78.** Metro: Diagonal.

Zara ★★ Begun in the 1970s by Amancio Ortega (one of the richest men in Spain), the fashion house of Zara launched a worldwide revolution with an aim to allow every woman to dress up like a movie star—but at an affordable price. It now has stores in some 65 countries, but its major outlets are in Barcelona, the most central one of which is recommended below. The atmosphere is tumultuous here, and there is very little customer service, but the merchandise is a good value for clothes horses who want to stay atop the recent trends. It is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 9pm. Av. Puerta del Angel 32–34. www.zara.com. ✆ **93-317-65-86.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

GALLERIES

Art Picasso This gift shop sells good lithographic reproductions of works by Picasso, Miró, and Dalí, as well as T-shirts emblazoned with the masters' designs. Tiles often bear their provocatively painted scenes. It is open daily from 10am to 8pm; summer hours are 9:30am to 8pm. Tapinería 10. ✆ **93-268-32-40.** Metro: Jaume I.

Sala Parés ★★ Established in 1840, this is a Barcelona institution. The Maragall family recognizes and promotes the work of Spanish and Catalán painters and sculptors, many of whom have gone on to acclaim. Paintings are displayed in a two-story amphitheater, with high-tech steel balconies supported by a quartet of steel columns evocative of Gaudí. Exhibitions of the most avant-garde art in Barcelona change about every 3 weeks. The gallery is open Monday to Saturday from 10:30am to 2pm and 4:30 to 8:30pm, and Sunday (only in winter) 11:30am to 3pm. Petritxol 5. www.salapares.com. ✆ **93-318-70-08.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

LEATHER

Loewe ★★ Barcelona's biggest branch of this prestigious Madrid-based leather-goods chain is in one of the best-known *modernisme* buildings in the city. Everything is top-notch, from the elegant showroom to the expensive merchandise to the helpful salespeople. The company exports its goods to branches throughout Asia, Europe, and North America. It's open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8:30pm. Passeig de Gràcia 35. www.loewe.com. ✆ **93-216-04-00.** Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

MARKETS

El Encants antiques market is held every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday in Plaça de les Glòries Catalánes (www.encantsbcn.com; Metro: Glòries). Go anytime during the day to survey the selection.

Coins and postage stamps are traded and sold in **Plaça Reial** on Sunday from 10am to 8pm. It's off the southern flank of Les Rambles (Metro: Drassanes). A book and coin market is held at the **Ronda Sant Antoni** every Sunday from 10am to 2pm (Metro: Universitat).

Mercat Gòtic, one of the best flea markets in Catalunya, is held every Thursday from 9am to 8pm at Plaça Nova, at the base of the 15th-century Cathedral of Barcelona (Metro: Jaume I). A lot of upscale merchandise is hawked here at bargain prices, from antique dolls to antique jewelry, even 1950s comics.

MUSIC

Casa Beethoven Established in 1880, this store carries the most complete collection of sheet music in town. The collection naturally focuses on the works of Spanish and Catalán composers. Music lovers might make some rare discoveries. Hours are Monday to Friday from 9am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and Saturday from 9am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8pm. Les Rambles 97. www.casabeethoven.com. ✆ **93-301-48-26.** Metro: Liceu.

POTTERY

Itaca Here you'll find a wide array of handmade pottery from Catalunya and other parts of Spain, as well as from Portugal and Morocco. The merchandise has been selected for its basic purity, integrity, and simplicity. It is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8:30pm. Carrer Ferran 26. ✆ **93-301-30-44.** Metro: Liceu.

SHOES

La Manual Alpargatera ★ Catalunya's most famous espadrilles workshop opened in 1940, right after the Spanish Civil War. Well ensconced in Barri Gòtic, it is still going strong. Shoes are made of natural materials such as hemp, jute, cotton, and linen. Espadrilles have been around for 4,000 years, but today they are more stylish than ever, including an *espadenya* with ribbon ankle-ties. You can also buy platform-wedge espadrilles or even pancake-flat espadrilles. Patrons have included everyone from the pope to certain movie stars stopping off here en route to their vacation home in Mallorca. In days gone by, Salvador Dalí was said to be a faithful customer. It is open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 8pm. Calle Avinyó. www.lamanual.net. ✆ **93-301-01-72.** Metro: Jaume I or Barceloneta.

SHOPPING CENTERS & MALLS

The landscape has exploded since the mid-1980s with the construction of several American-style shopping malls. Some are too far from the city's historic core to be convenient for most foreign visitors, but here's a description of some of the city's best.

Les Glòries Built in 1995, this three-story emporium of the good life is the largest shopping center in downtown Barcelona. It's based on the California model but is crammed into a distinctly urban neighborhood. It has more than 100 shops, some posh, others much less so. Although there's a typical shopping mall anonymity to some aspects of this place, you'll be able to find almost anything you might have forgotten while packing. And if you're homesick for fast food, you'll find it in abundance at the food court. Hours are Monday to Saturday from 10am to 10pm. Av. Diagonal 208. www.lesglories.com. ✆ **93-486-04-04.** Metro: Glòries.

L'Illa Diagonal (Diagonal Center) This two-story mall contains stores devoted to luxury products, as well as a scattering of bars, cafes, and simple but cheerful restaurants favored by office workers and shoppers. It has about half the number of shops offered by Les Glòries (see above). Built in the early 1990s, it even has an area devoted to video games where teenagers can make as much electronic noise as they want while their guardians shop. The mall is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 9:30pm. Av. Diagonal 557. www.lilla.com. ✆ **93-444-00-00.** Metro: María Cristina.

Maremagnum The best thing about this place is its position adjacent to the waterfront on Barcelona's historic seacoast; it's also well suited to outdoor promenades. Built in the early 1990s near the Columbus Monument, it contains many shops, 12 cinemas, an IMAX theater, and a wide variety of restaurants, pubs, and discos catering to a youthful crowd. Nightlife here begins at 11pm and ends at dawn. You might get the idea that only a few of the people who come here are interested in shopping. Though the bars stay open late, the mall is open daily from 10am to 10pm. Moll d'Espanya s/n. www.maremagnum.es. ✆ **93-225-81-00.** Metro: Drassanes or Barceloneta.

Poble Espanyol This is not technically a shopping mall but a "village" (p. 451). About 35 stores sell typical folk crafts from every part of Spain: glassware, leather goods, pottery, paintings, carvings, and so forth. Store hours vary, but you can visit anytime during the day. Marqués de Comillas 13, Parc de Montjuïc. www.poble-espanyol.com. ✆ **93-508-63-31.** Metro: Espanya. Bus: 13 or 50.

An alleyway in the Poble Espanyol.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Barcelona comes alive at night with a staggering array of diversions. There is something to interest almost everyone and to fit most pocketbooks. The **funicular ride** to Tibidabo and the illuminated **fountains** of Montjuïc are especially popular, and fashionable **clubs** operate in nearly every major district of the city. For families, the **amusement parks** are the busiest venues.

Nightlife begins for many Barcelonans with an early evening **promenade (*paseo*)** along Les Rambles, usually from 5 to 7pm. Then things quiet down a bit until a second surge of energy brings out the crowds again. After that the esplanade clears out quite a bit, but it's always lively. Locals sometimes opt for an evening in the ***tascas* (taverns),** or perhaps settle in for a bottle of wine at a cafe, an easy and inexpensive way to spend an evening people-watching. Serious drinking in pubs and cafes begins by 10 or 11pm. But for the most fashionable bars and discos, Barcelonans delay their entrances until at least 1am.

Illuminated fountains at Montjuïc.

Your best source of local information is a little magazine called *Guía del Ocio,* which previews "La Semana de Barcelona" ("This Week in Barcelona"). It's in Spanish, but most of its listings should be comprehensible to those who don't speak Spanish. Almost every news kiosk along Les Rambles carries the publication.

If you're very young, you might want to check out the nightlife scene at **Maremagnum** (see "Shopping Centers & Malls," above).

If you've been scared off by press reports about Les Rambles between the Plaça de Catalunya and the Columbus Monument, you should know that the area has really been cleaned up in recent years. Still, you will feel safer along La Rambla de Catalunya, in l'Eixample, north of the Plaça de Catalunya. This street and its offshoots are lively at night, with many cafes and bars. During the Franco era the center of club life was the cabaret-packed district near the south of Les Rambles, where you can find everything from loud sailor bars to transvestite cabaret.

Cultural events are also big in the Catalán repertoire, and old-fashioned **dance halls** survive in some places. Although **disco** has waned in some parts of the world, it is still going strong in Barcelona. Decaying movie houses, abandoned garages, and long-closed vaudeville theaters have been taken over and restored as nightlife venues.

Flamenco isn't the rage here that it is in Sevilla and Madrid, but it still has some devotees, despite being seen as an un-Catalán art form. The city is also filled with **jazz** aficionados. Best of all, the old tradition of the vaudeville **music hall** lives on.

The Performing Arts

Culture—and the performing arts—is deeply ingrained in the Catalán soul. In fact, some performances take place on the street, especially along Les Rambles; crowds often gather around a singer or a mime. A city square will suddenly come alive on Saturday night with a spontaneous festival. Early 20th-century writer Rose MacCauley described the scene as "tempestuous, surging, [full of] irrepressible life and brio," and it really has not changed.

Long a city of the arts, Barcelona experienced a cultural decline during the Franco years, but now it is filled once again with the best opera, symphonic, and choral music. At the venues listed here, unless otherwise specified, ticket prices depend on the event.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

La Casa dels Músics Pianist Luis de Arquer has established a small chamber company in his 19th-century Gràcia home. Here in an intimate atmosphere, small-scale productions of *opera buffa* and *bel canto* are presented, usually beginning at 9pm (but you must call to confirm that presentations will take place and to make reservations). For the true music lover, this could be your most charming evening in Barcelona. Carrer Encarnació 25. www.lacasadelsmusics.com. ☎ **93-284-99-20.** Tickets 20€. Metro: Fontana or Joanic.

Palau de la Música Catalána ★★ In a city chock-full of architectural highlights, this one stands out. In 1908, Catalán architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner designed this structure using stained glass, ceramics, statuary, and ornate lamps, among other elements. It stands today, restored, as a classic example of *modernisme.* Concerts and leading recitals take place here. Open daily from 10am to 3:30pm. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 9pm,

A mosaic in the Palau de la Música Catalána.

and Sunday 1 hour before concerts. Sant Francesc de Paula 2. www.palaumusica.org. ☎ **93-295-72-00.** Metro: Urquinaona.

FLAMENCO

El Tablao de Carmen This club presents flamenco cabaret in the re-created village on Montjuïc. You can go early and explore the village, and even have dinner. This place has long been a tourist favorite. The club is open Tuesday to Sunday from 8pm to around 1am (weeknights), often until 2 or 3am on weekends, depending on business. The first show is at 7:30pm; the second show is at 10pm. Reservations are recommended. Poble Espanyol de Montjuïc. www.tablaodecarmen.com. ☎ **93-325-68-95.** Dinner and show 69€; drink and show 35€. Metro: Espanya.

Los Tarantos Established in 1963, this is the oldest flamenco club in Barcelona, with a rigid allegiance to the tenets of Andalucían flamenco. Its roster of artists changes regularly. They often come from Sevilla or Córdoba, stamping out their well-rehearsed passions in ways that make the audience appreciate the nuances of Spain's most intensely controlled dance idiom. No food is served. The place resembles a cabaret theater, where up to 120 people at a time can drink, talk quietly, and savor a dance that combines elements of medieval Christian and Muslim traditions. The club is open daily 8 to 11:30pm. Each show lasts around an hour. Shows are held Monday to Saturday at 8:30, 9:30, and 10:30pm. Plaça Reial 17. www.masimas.com/tarantos. ☎ **93-319-17-89.** Cover 7€. Metro: Liceu.

Tablao Flamenco Cordobés At the southern end of Les Rambles, a short walk from the harborfront, you'll hear the strum of the guitar, the rhythmic clapping of hands, and the haunting sound of flamenco, a tradition here since 1968. Head upstairs to an Andalucían-style room where performances take place with the traditional *cuadro flamenco*—singers, dancers, and guitarist. Cordobés offers the best flamenco in Barcelona, though in a highly touristic environment. Most of the year they have three shows starting at 8:15, 10, and 11:30pm, but if you want to have dinner (not recommended), shows are at 7, 8:30, and 10pm.

Reservations are required. Las Ramblas 35. www.tablaocordobes.com. ✆ **93-317-57-11.** Dinner and show 69€; 1 drink and show 37€. Metro: Drassanes.

THEATER

Theater is presented in the Catalán language and therefore will not be of interest to most visitors. For those who do speak the language, or perhaps are fluent in Spanish (though you're still unlikely to understand much), here are some recommendations.

Gran Teatre del Liceu ★★ This monument to Belle Epoque extravagance, a 2,700-seat opera house, is one of the grandest theaters in the world. It was designed by the Catalán architect Josep Oriol Mestves. On January 31, 1994, fire gutted the opera house, shocking Cataláns, many of whom regarded this place as the very citadel of their culture. The government immediately vowed to rebuild, and the new Liceu was reopened in 1999, well before the millennium deadline set by the cultural czars. La Rambla 51–59. www.liceubarcelona.com. ✆ **93-485-99-13** or 93-485-99-00. Metro: Liceu.

Mercat de Les Flors Housed in a building constructed for the 1929 International Exhibition at Montjuïc, this is the other major Catalán theater. Peter Brook first used it as a theater for a 1983 presentation of *Carmen*. The theater focuses on innovators in drama, dance, and music, as well as European modern dance companies. Lleida 59. www.mercatflors.org. ✆ **93-426-18-75.** Tickets 8€–30€. Metro: Espanya or Pueblo Seco.

Teatre Nacional de Catalunya Josep María Flotats heads this major company. The actor-director trained in the tradition of theater repertory, working in Paris at Théâtre de la Villa and the Comédie Française. His company presents both classic and contemporary plays. The theater is closed in August. Plaça de les Arts 1. www.tnc.es. ✆ **93-306-57-00.** Tickets 13€–33€. Metro: Glòries.

Gran Teatre del Liceu.

Cabaret, Jazz & More

Barcelona Pipa Club If you find the Harlem Jazz Club (see below) small, wait until you get to the "Pipe Club." Long beloved by jazz aficionados, this is for true devotees. Ring the buzzer to be admitted, as if you were entering a speak-easy. Climb two flights in a run-down building. This is hardly a trendy nightclub, with five rooms decorated with displays or photographs of pipes. Music ranges from New Orleans jazz to blues. The club and its comfortable bar are open daily from 6pm to 3am. Plaça Reial 3. www.bpipaclub.com. ✆ **93-301-11-65.** Metro: Liceu.

Harlem Jazz Club ★ On a nice street in the Old Quarter, this is one of Barcelona's oldest and finest jazz clubs. It's also one of the smallest, with just a handful of tables. No matter how many times you've heard "Take the A Train" or "Night in Tunisia," they sound new here. Music is viewed with reverence: Everyone stops talking and listens when the performers are on. Live jazz, blues, tango, Brazilian music—the sounds are always fresh. Several nights a week are given over to flamenco-jazz fusion. It's open Tuesday to Thursday and Sunday from 8pm to 4am, Friday and Saturday till 5am. Live music begins at 10:30pm Tuesday to Thursday and Sunday, and at 11:30pm on Friday and Saturday. The second set is at midnight (Fri–Sat 1am). It's closed 2 weeks in August. Comtessa de Sobradiel 8. www.harlemjazzclub.es. ✆ **93-310-07-55.** 1-drink minimum. Metro: Jaume I or Liceu.

Jamboree ★ In the heart of the Barri Gòtic, this has long been one of the city's premier locations for good blues and jazz, although it doesn't feature jazz every night. Sometimes a world-class performer will appear here, but most likely it'll be a younger group. The crowd knows its stuff and demands only the best talent. You might find that a Latin dance band has been scheduled, a Chicago blues band is playing, or a hot new group from Brazil is in town. Jamboree is open daily from 8:30pm to 5am; shows are at 9 and 11pm. Plaça Reial 17. www.masimas.com/jamboree. ✆ **93-319-17-89.** Cover 10€–13€. Metro: Liceu.

Luz de Gas This theater has the hottest Latin jazz on weekends and cabaret on weeknights. The place is an Art Nouveau delight, with colored glass lamps and enough voluptuous nudes to please Rubens himself. The club was once an entire theater, and its original seating has been turned into different areas, each with its own bar. The lower two levels open onto the dance floor and stage. If you'd like to talk, head for the top tier, which has a glass enclosure. Call to see what the lineup is on any given night: jazz, pop, soul, rhythm and blues, or anything else. Hours are Sunday and Monday 11pm to 4am, Tuesday 11pm to 4:30am, Wednesday 11pm to 5am, Thursday 11pm to 5:30am, and Friday and Saturday 11pm to 5:45am. Carrer de Muntaner 246. www.luzdegas.com. ✆ **93-209-77-11.** Cover (includes 1 drink) 15€. Bus: 6, 27, 32, or 34.

Dance Clubs & Discos

La Paloma Those feeling nostalgic may want to drop in on Barcelona's most famous dance hall. Remember the fox trot? The mambo? If not, learn about them here, along with the tango, the cha-cha, and the bolero. Live orchestras provide the music. The ornate old hall is open Thursday to Sunday. Matinees are from 6 to 9:30pm; night dances (somewhat hipper and younger) are from 11:30pm to 5am. Drink prices start at 4€. Tigre 27. ✆ **93-301-68-97.** Cover 8€. Metro: Universitat.

Mojito Club Named after Ernest Hemingway's favorite drink, this club rocks with a Latin beat. Every night here is like Carnaval in Rio. The nickname for the club is S&S (samba and salsa). An international crowd frequents the joint, including a lot of visiting South Americans. It's open daily 11pm to 4:30am. Carrer Rossellón 217. www.mojitobcn.com. ☎ **93-237-65-28.** Cover 10€. Metro: Diagonal.

Sala Razzmatazz The name is appropriate: This multilevel club in a converted warehouse is actually five clubs in one, including the Razz Club, Lo*Li*Ta, and Disco Inferno. Each club has its own music. A large crowd of university students favors the place. One entrance fee covers admission to all clubs, but mixed cocktails are expensive, hovering around 8€. Hours are Friday and Saturday 1 to 5am. Carrer Pamplona 88. www.salarazzmatazz.com. ☎ **93-320-82-00.** Cover 13€–30€ (except for special concerts). Metro: Bogatell.

Cafes

Good old-fashioned cafes are as much a part of the intellectual tradition in Barcelona as they are in Paris, Amsterdam, and even Madrid. Once upon a time, everything from politics to art would be debated in the traditional format of a *tertulia,* a semiformalized combined argument and conversation. The casual format and the din of nearby conversations also made cafes favored meeting spots for Catalán nationalists in the Franco years. Nowadays they are more noted for their coffee drinks than intellectual ferment.

Cafè de L'Òpera ★ Located across from the Liceu opera house, this is Barcelona's most famous cafe, having opened more than a century ago. It has remained the favorite stopover not only for operagoers and performers but for those strolling along Les Rambles. Because it opens at 8:30am daily, many locals come here for a traditional breakfast. At any time of the day you can enjoy tapas, drinks, and people-watching. La Rambla 74. www.cafeoperabcn.com. ☎ **93-317-75-85.** Metro: Liceu.

Cafes along Les Rambles.

The Best Ham Sandwich in the World

It's debatable, but the world's best ham sandwich is served along Les Rambles—at **Viena,** La Rambla del Estudis 115 (www.viena.es; ✆ **93-317-14-92**), to be exact. With its plastic menus and *hamburguesas,* the cafe doesn't appear special, in spite of its interior of wrought iron and marble. But step right up and order a beer from the porcelain-and-brass tap as well as a *flauta d'ibéric jabugo,* which English-speaking people call a ham roll or sandwich. Prepare yourself for a taste sensation.

The *flauta* (flute) itself resembles a long roll or small sub and has a crisp crust and a tender, chewy interior. It encases a slice of the famous salt-cured ham from the famous Iberian black pig whose diet includes ripe acorns. These pigs are raised in Jabugo, near Sevilla. Their meat is like prosciutto—but so much better.

Costing 7€ a serving, a ham sandwich doesn't come better than this.

Café Zurich At the top of Les Rambles, this is a traditional meeting point in Barcelona; it's also a great place to watch the passing parade along Catalunya's most fabled boulevard. If the weather is fair, opt for an outdoor table to enjoy all kinds of excellent tapas, cold beer, and general good times. Launched in the early 1920s, it's been going strong ever since, with its dark-wood furnishings and columns. Try one of the little sandwiches here, called *bocadillos.* Those with serrano ham are especially good. The cafe is open November to April daily 8am to 11pm, May to October 8am to 1am. Plaça de Catalunya 1. ✆ **93-317-91-53.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

Bars & Pubs

Cocktail Bar Boadas This intimate, conservative bar is usually filled with regulars. Established in 1933 by a bartender who learned the trade in Havana's Floridita Bar, it is near the top of Les Rambles. Many visitors stop in for a predinner drink and snack before wandering to one of the district's many restaurants. The bar stocks a wide array of Caribbean rums, Russian vodkas, and English gins, and the skilled bartenders know how to mix them all. The place is especially well known for its daiquiris. The dress code is formal and slightly conservative. It opens daily at noon and closes at 2am Sunday to Thursday, and 3am Friday and Saturday. Tallers 1. ✆ **93-318-88-26.** Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

Dirty Dick's Located in a residential part of town, Dirty Dick's strikes a pose as a British pub with lots of dark paneling and exposed brick, with banquettes for quiet conversation. If you sit at the bar, you'll be faced with a tempting array of tiny sandwiches that taste as good as they look. The pub is at the crossing of Vía Augusta, a main thoroughfare through the district, and is open daily 6pm to 2:30am. Taberna Inglesa, Carrer Marc Aureli 2. ✆ **93-200-89-52.** Metro: Muntaner.

Dry Martini This Catalán version of an American bar is increasingly becoming a chic rendezvous for a late-night drink. A laid-back crowd shows up, often locals and an occasional tourist. The well-mixed cocktails make this a venue worth seeking out. The bartender has a number of drink specials. It's a great place to sit and talk as you watch nighttime Barcelona pass by your table. It's open Monday to Friday 1pm to 2:30am, Saturday and Sunday 6:30pm to 3am. Aribau 162–166. www.drymartinibcn.com. ✆ **93-217-50-72.** Metro: Diagonal.

El Born Facing a rustic-looking square, this former fish store has been cleverly converted. There are a few tables near the front, but the inner room is cozy with rattan furniture and modern paintings. The music might be anything from Louis Armstrong to classic rock and roll. The room is somewhat cramped. Opening hours are Sunday to Thursday 6pm to 2am, Friday and Saturday 6pm to 3am. Beer and wine are quite cheap. Passeig del Born 26. ✆ **93-319-53-33.** Metro: Jaume I or Barceloneta.

Schilling A young and stylish crowd can be seen crossing Plaça Reial, with its Gaudí lampposts, heading for this old cafe to sample its drinks, succulent pastas, savory tapas, and panini. Forsaking Barcelona's fabled modernism, Schilling revels in another era, with its iron columns, marble tables, and wall of wine bottles. A large gay crowd often dominates the night along with some hip, purportedly straight young things and a few aging pensioners. Service is slow, and the staff is proud of it—since patrons can spend more time talking each other up. It's open Monday to Thursday from 10am to 2:30am, Friday and Saturday from 10am to 3am, and Sunday from noon to 2am. Carrer Ferran 23. www.cafeschilling.com. ✆ **93-317-67-87.** Metro: Liceu.

Champagne Bars

The Catalans call their own version of sparkling wine cava. In Catalán, champagne bars are called *xampanyerías*. The Spanish wines are often excellent, and quite often better than their French counterparts in the same price range. With more than 50 Spanish companies producing cava, and each bottling up to a dozen grades of wine, the best way to learn about Spanish champagne is to visit the vineyards or to sample the products at a *xampanyería*.

Champagne bars usually open at 7pm and stay open until the sky is streaked with the first rays of the sun. They serve tapas ranging from caviar to smoked fish to frozen chocolate truffles. Most establishments sell only a limited array of house cavas by the glass, and more esoteric varieties by the bottle. You'll be offered a choice of *brut* (slightly sweet) or *brut nature*. The most acclaimed brands include Mont-Marçal, Gramona, Mestres, Parxet, Torello, and Recaredo.

El Xampanyet ★★ This cozy champagne bar has been patronized by in-the-know champagne lovers since it opened in 1929. But when the Picasso Museum opened nearby, it started attracting international patrons, and still does today. It's colorful, decorated with wine barrels, ceramic tiles, antique objects, marble-topped tables, and a handsome zinc bar. Rather simple tapas are served, including green olives and anchovies in vinegar. Hours are Monday to Saturday 8pm to 2am (it's closed in Aug). Montcada 22. ✆ **93-319-70-03.** Metro: Jaume I.

Xampú Xampany At the corner of the Plaça de Tetuan, this *xampanyería* offers a variety of hors d'oeuvres in addition to wine. Abstract paintings, touches of high tech, and bouquets of flowers break up the pastel color scheme. It's open Monday to Saturday from 8pm to 1:30am. Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes 702. ✆ **93-265-04-83.** Metro: Girona or Tetuan.

The LGBT Scene

DBOY Club This late-night club is arguably the raunchiest gay bar in Barcelona. If you show up (go late), you'll see Barcelona's handsomest guys dancing with their shirts off. The club technically closes at 4am, but often it's going strong long after the rooster has crowed. The gay ambience is about the liveliest in the

Piaf, Drag Queens & a Walk on the Wild Side

Do you long to check out the seedy part of Barcelona brought so vividly to life by writers such as Jean Genet? Much of it is gone forever, but *la vida* nostalgically lives on in pockets like the **Bar Pastís,** Carrer Santa Mónica 4 (www.barpastis.com; ✆ **93-318-79-80;** Metro: Drassanes).

Valencianos Carme Pericás and Joaquín Ballester opened this tiny bar just off the southern end of Les Rambles in 1947. They made it a shrine to Edith Piaf, and her songs play on an old phonograph in back of the bar. The decor consists mostly of paintings by Ballester, who had a dark, rather morbid vision of the world.

Outside the window, check out the view—usually a parade of transvestite hookers. The crowd is likely to include almost anyone, especially people who used to be called bohemians. The bar features (very loud) live music: French music on Sunday, tango on Tuesday, and *canta autor* on Wednesday, in which the performer both writes and sings his own songs. Bar Pastis is open Monday to Thursday from 7:30pm to 2:30am, and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday until 3am.

city. Sometimes live performances make the atmosphere sizzle; otherwise DJs rule, including on theme nights. This club is open only on Saturday starting at midnight. Ronda Sant-Pere 19–21. ✆ **93-318-06-86.** Metro: Diagonal.

La Concha (the Shell) Just to let you in on how campy this dive is, it's dedicated to drag icon Sara Montiel, that 1960s favorite whose photographs fill the walls from floor to ceiling. A gay or gay-friendly crowd frequents the joint. Expect a Moroccan gay-kitsch aura in this Raval joint. There's a small dance floor where sometimes a live band plays for dancers (of all gender orientations) who hit the tiles with various renditions of the tango, fox trot, and perhaps flamenco. La Concha is open daily 4pm to 4:30am. Calle Guardia. ✆ **93-302-41-18.** Metro: Drassanes.

Metro Still one of the most popular all-male gay discos in Barcelona, Metro attracts a diverse crowd—from young fashion victims to more rough-and-ready macho types. One dance floor plays contemporary house and dance music, and the other traditional Spanish music mixed with Spanish pop. This is a good opportunity to watch men of all ages dance Las Sevillanas in pairs with surprising grace. The gay press in Barcelona quite accurately dubs the back room here as a "notorious, lascivious labyrinth of lust." One interesting feature appears in the bathrooms, where videos have been installed above the urinals. It's open Sunday and Tuesday to Thursday midnight to 5am, Friday and Saturday midnight to 6am, and Monday 1 to 5am. Sepúlveda 185. www.metrodiscobcn.com. ✆ **93-323-52-27.** Cover 15€. Metro: Universitat.

WHERE TO STAY

Barcelona may be one of the most expensive cities in Spain, but prices at Barcelona's first-class and deluxe hotels are completely in line with those in other major European cities—and they even look reasonable compared with prices in Paris and London.

Safety is an important factor when choosing a hotel. Some of the least expensive hotels are not in good locations. A popular area for budget-conscious travelers is the **Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter),** in the heart of town. You'll live and eat less expensively here than in any other part of Barcelona, but you should be careful when returning to your hotel late at night.

More modern, but more expensive, hotels can be found north of the Barri Gòtic in **l'Eixample,** centered on the Metro stops Plaça de Catalunya and Universitat. Many buildings are in the *modernisme* style, from the first 2 decades of the 20th century—and sometimes the elevators and plumbing are of the same vintage. L'Eixample is a desirable and safe neighborhood, especially along its wide boulevards. Noise is the only problem you might encounter.

Farther north, above the Avinguda Diagonal, you'll enter the **Gràcia** area, where you can enjoy distinctively Catalán neighborhood life. The main attractions are a bit distant from here but can be reached easily by public transportation.

Many of Barcelona's hotels were built before the invention of the automobile, and even those that weren't rarely found space for a garage. When parking is available at the hotel, the price is indicated; otherwise, the hotel staff will direct you to a garage. Expect to pay upwards of 18€ for 24 hours, and if you do have a car, you might as well park it and leave it there, because we never recommend driving around the city.

Ciutat Vella (Barri Gòtic, El Raval & La Ribera)

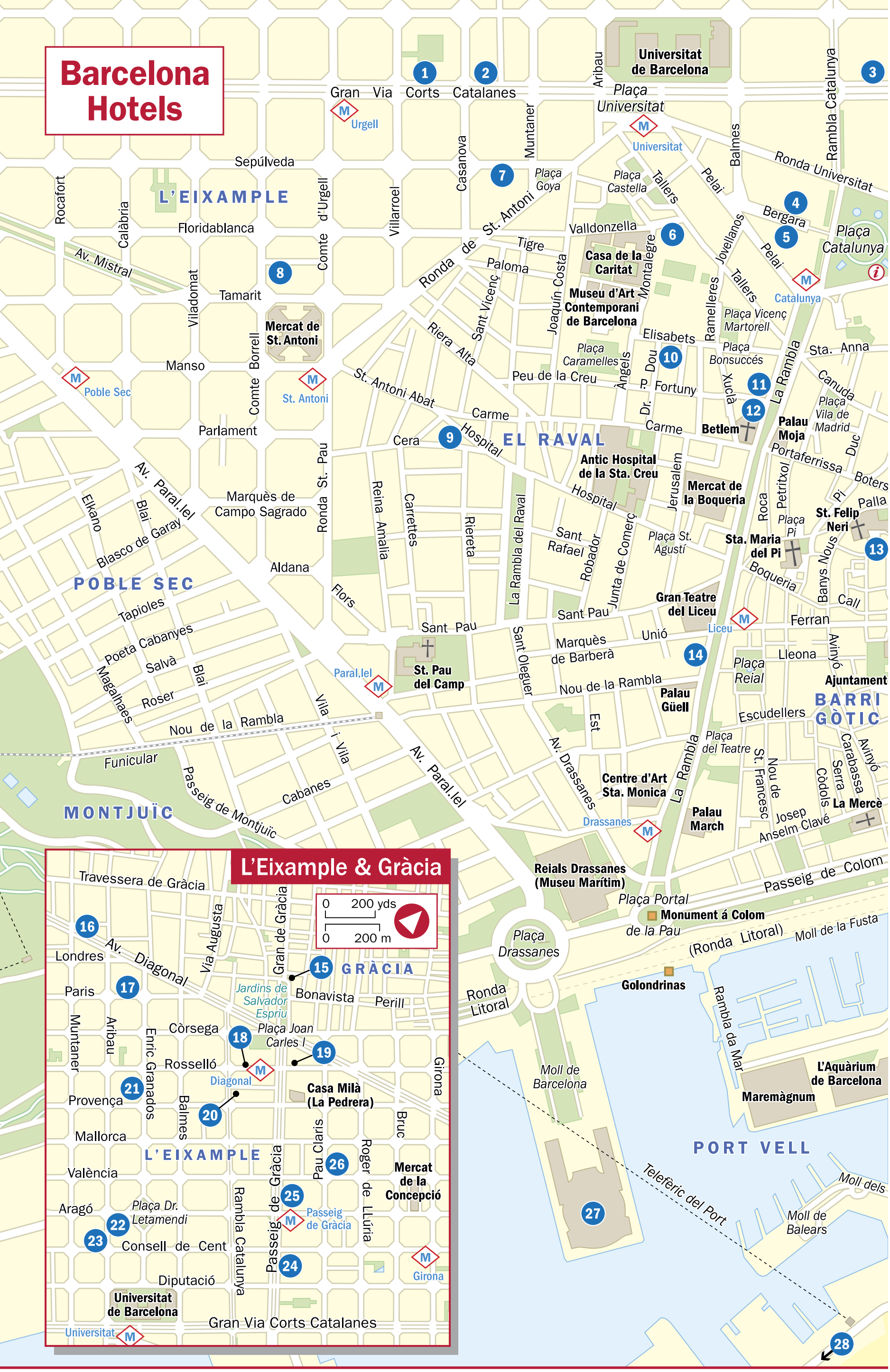
The Ciutat Vella (Old City) forms the monumental center of Barcelona, taking in Les Rambles, Plaça de Sant Jaume, Vía Laietana, Passeig Nacional, and Passeig de Colom. It contains some of the city's best hotel bargains. Most of the glamorous, and more expensive, hotels are here.

VERY EXPENSIVE

H1898 ★★ H1898's location is on the most bustling stretch of Les Rambles, but the elegant rooms inside, evoking a colonial yacht club, are soundproof. The owners re-created the opulence of Spain in the 1800s but with 21st-century conveniences. The hotel takes its name from the year Spain lost the Philippines to the United States; the impressive building was converted from the former headquarters of the Philippines Tobacco Company. The rooftop terrace and lap pool are certainly a decadent spot for lounging. The hotel offers five levels of rooms, ranging from Classic to the most spacious, known as Privilege. If money is no object, book one of three dramatic colonial suites with a Jacuzzi, a swimming pool, and a private garden opening onto Les Rambles.

La Rambla 109 (entrance on Pinto Fortuny), 08002 Barcelona. www.hotel1898.com. ☎ **93-552-95-52.** Fax 93-552-95-50. 169 units. 255€–385€ double; 1,228€–1,460€ colonial suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; exercise room; 2 heated pools (1 indoor); spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Murmuri ★★ In the heart of Barcelona, this small hotel is a hip address in a city already blessed with plenty of urban hotel chic. It has all the elements for today's modern traveler, right down to the efficient black-clad staff, a chic Asian restaurant, and even a cocktail bar often filled with young beauties from South America. In the midsize to spacious bedrooms, you can adjust the lighting to fit your mood. Guest rooms have tasteful furnishings in neutral tones and twin or queen-size beds overlooking a pedestrian street. Soundproof double-glazed windows protect you from the traffic noises.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Marquès de Campo Sagrado
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La Rambla del Raval
Sant Rafael
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Av. Paral.lel
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MONTJUÏC
Centre d'Art Sta. Monica
Palau March
Josep Anselm Clavé
Drassanes
Reials Drassanes (Museu Marítim)
Passeig de Colom
Plaça Portal de la Pau
Monument á Colom
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(Ronda Litoral)
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Ronda Litoral
Golondrinas
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Moll de Barcelona
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Diagonal
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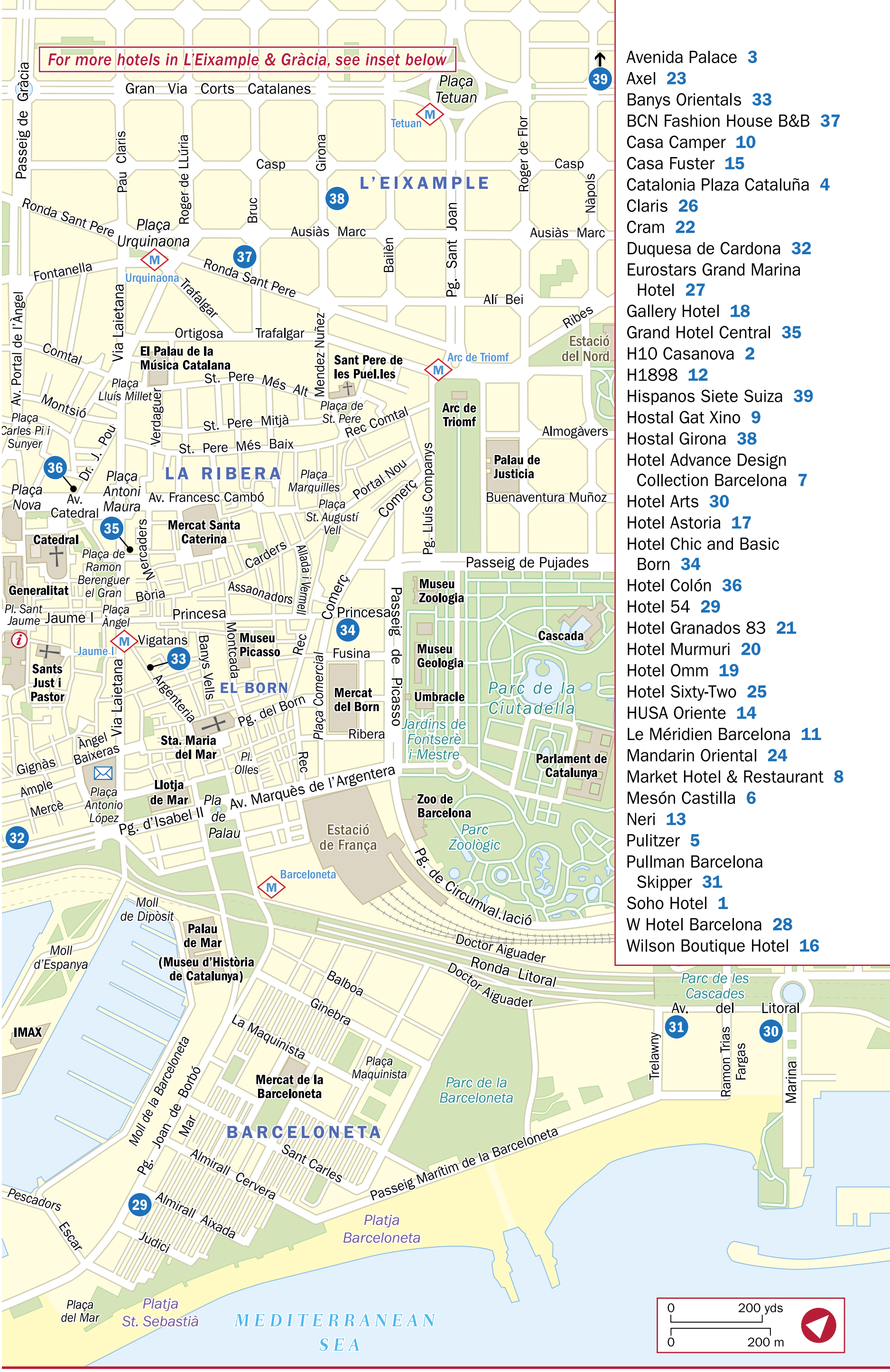
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La Rambla de Catalunya 104, 08008 Barcelona. www.murmuri.com. ☎ **93-550-06-00.** 7 units. 139€–338€ double; 379€–478€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 24€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

Le Méridien Barcelona ★★ Originally built in 1956 and extensively restored in 2007, this is the most dependable traditional hotel in the Ciutat Vella, or Old City. It's superior in comfort to its two closest rivals in the area, the Colón and the Rivoli Ramblas. (Of course, it's also more expensive). Guest rooms are spacious and comfortable, with extra-large beds; bathrooms have heated floors. All rooms come with double-glazed windows, but that doesn't fully block out noise from Les Rambles.

La Rambla 111, 08002 Barcelona. www.meridienbarcelona.com. ☎ **800/543-4300** in the U.S., or 93-318-62-00. Fax 93-301-77-76. 233 units. 179€–319€ double; 429€–2,500€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 38€. Metro: Liceu or Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (66€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (20€ per 24 hr.).

EXPENSIVE

Casa Camper ★ 🎁 The company that made chunky boho shoes a symbol of chic has worked a similar repositioning of a 19th-century Raval tenement into a cool hotel with an agreeable Zen-like ambience and a whole lot of fire-engine red accents in the decor. Most rooms have a whimsical, hippie-chic decor, and they're playfully outfitted with hammocks as well as beds. Like the shoes, it's a hybrid of indulgence and asceticism—not just a place to say, but a sensibility to embrace. Rooms are uncluttered to some eyes, austere to others, and come with separate sleeping and living spaces. The roof terrace beckons with its hammocks at siesta time. Each floor has a suite with a large living room linked to a bedroom through a pocket door. An on-site cafeteria provides a round-the-clock complimentary spread of snacks, including fruit, hot soup, and sandwiches. A Camper shoe boutique is within walking distance.

Carrer Elisabets 11, 08001 Barcelona. www.casacamper.com. ☎ **93-342-62-80.** Fax 93-342-75-63. 25 units. 183€–275€ double; 216€–305€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 30€. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Bar; airport transfers (72€); babysitting; bikes; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Neri ★★ In the heart of the Barri Gótic, this boutique hotel was created by joining a medieval palace and a stone building that had been destroyed during the Civil War and then rebuilt in 1958. Today's stunning facade overlooks Plaça Sant Felip Neri, one of the most evocative old squares of Barcelona. An avant-garde design has been woven into ancient structures—for example, a 12th-century stone wall separates the restaurant area from the lounge bar. Interior designer Cristina Gabás said she wanted to create a unique ambience in the bedrooms—"to play with the limits without falling into vulgarity." She succeeded admirably, using wood and stone enlivened with artwork seemingly inspired by Mark Rothko. The roof terrace, for drinks and breakfast, is ideal in summer. The aromatic Mediterranean cuisine served at the on-site restaurant is another compelling reason to stay here.

Sant Severe 5, Barri Gòtic, 08002 Barcelona. www.hotelneri.com. ☎ **93-304-06-55.** Fax. 93-304-03-37. 22 units. 180€–270€ double; from 215€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Public parking nearby 25€.

Metro: Liceu or Jaume I. **Amenities:** Restaurant; cafe/bar; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Banys Orientals 🎁 Its location in El Born at the doorway to the Barri Gòtic is a compelling reason to stay here in the most historic part of Barcelona—but this boutique hotel also offers quality and comfort at an affordable price. Hipsters and fashionistas who could afford more often prefer it. A former private mansion from the 1800s received a radical modernist makeover, with dark hardwood floors, shiny marble bathrooms, and some high-ceilinged suites with private patios. On the ground level is **Senyor Parellada,** a classic Barcelona restaurant serving Catalán cuisine.

Argentería 37, 08003 Barcelona. www.hotelbanysorientals.com. ☎ **93-268-84-60.** Fax 93-268-84-61. 43 units. 100€ double; 130€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 22€. Metro: Jaume I. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Catalonia Plaza Cataluña ★ This upscale hotel occupies an 1899 town house built for the duke of Bergara. In 1998, the original five-story structure more than doubled in size with the addition of a new seven-story tower. Guest rooms throughout have the same conservative, traditional comforts. Each has large, comfortable beds with first-rate mattresses, elegant fabrics, and good lighting. Public areas contain most of the paneling, stained glass, and decorative accessories originally installed by *modernisme* architect Emilio Salas i Cortes, a professor of the movement's greatest luminary, Antoni Gaudí. In the reception area, look for the original stained-glass panels displaying the heraldic coat of arms of the duke of Bergara.

Bergara 11, 08002 Barcelona. http://cataloniaplazacataluna.barcelonahotels.it. ☎ **93-301-51-51.** Fax 93-317-34-42. 151 units. 118€–200€ double; 147€–295€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Public parking nearby 40€. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; outdoor heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Duquesa de Cardona ★★ A marvelous example of a recycled antique building, this structure dating from the 16th century has been given a new lease on life as an elegant boutique hotel. The palace was mainly constructed in the 1800s, though many stylings smack of Art Deco. Located at the maritime promenade, Moll de la Fusta, the hotel's backdrop is the historic Barri Gòtic. From its rooms you can enjoy a panoramic view of Montjuïc, as well as the Christopher Columbus monument and the Olympic Port. Ideal for honeymooners, many of the midsize bedrooms have a romantic feel, as well as sleek, contemporary bathrooms. Pay a few extra euros for the harborfront rooms, as the rear units are cramped. The public lounges are stylish, and the Mediterranean restaurant, with its original marble tiles, looks chic and serves good food.

Passeig Colom 12, 08002 Barcelona. www.hduquesadecardona.com. ☎ **93-268-90-90.** Fax 93-268-29-31. 40 units. 87€–195€ double; 210€–350€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Jaume I or Drassanes. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Grand Hotel Central ★ This hip hotel in the heart of El Born between Santa Caterina market and the cathedral was created out of a 1920s office building. Boasting one of the most helpful staffs in Barcelona, it offers as a special feature a small rooftop terrace with a horizon plunge pool. The bedrooms are serene and simple, with limed oak furniture and taupe-painted walls. The rooms have a sophisticated color scheme of tobacco, chocolate, and pewter. Opt for one of the sixth-floor doubles that doesn't face traffic-clogged Vía Laietana. The generous buffet breakfast offers a tasty assortment of regional cheeses, homemade pastries, and delightful finger sandwiches. The on-site restaurant, **Ávalon,** offers not only midafternoon tapas, but also the imaginative dishes overseen by Michelin-starred chef Ramón Freixa.

Vía Laietana 30, 08003 Barcelona. www.grandhotelcentral.com. ✆ **93-295-79-00.** Fax 93-268-12-15. 147 units. 130€–185€ double; 176€–460€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Barceloneta. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (90€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; rooftop heated pool; room service; Wi-Fi (14€ per 24 hr., in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar.

H10 Casanova ★ In this most stylish of Spain's cities, only a stylish hotel would do. The lobby is painted the color of pistachio ice cream, and a garden spa occupies the courtyard. Such design elements, along with a fusion-cuisine restaurant that blends Catalán with Mexican food, have turned this 18th-century limestone residence into a hotel with theatrical flair. Whimsical lighting fixtures and sculptural chairs add to the avant-garde look. The bedrooms come in a number of sizes and designs, beginning with standard doubles and going up to junior suites that are a study of both minimalism and comfort. Expect plush beds and hardwood floors, with some units opening onto a private balcony.

Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes 559, 08011 Barcelona. www.casanovabcnhotel.com. ✆ **93-396-48-00.** Fax 93-396-48-10. 124 units. 85€–175€ double; 145€–205€ junior suite. MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Universitat. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (80€); room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.), DSL connection (free).

Hotel Colón ★ The Colón was the choice of many luminaries in the mid–20th century who wanted American hotel comforts in the heart of Barcelona's medieval neighborhoods. It remains blessed with one of the most dramatic locations in the city, opposite the main entrance to the cathedral. Inside the dignified neoclassical facade, you'll find conservative and rather old-fashioned public rooms, a helpful staff, and roomy-enough guest units filled with heavily upholstered furniture. Despite recent renovations, the rooms retain an appealingly dowdy charm. Not all rooms have views, and the ones in back are quieter. Sixth-floor rooms with balconies overlooking the square are the most desirable. Some of the lower rooms are rather dark.

Av. de la Catedral 7, 08002 Barcelona. www.hotelcolon.es. ✆ **93-301-14-04.** Fax 93-317-29-15. 145 units. 85€–128€ double; from 140€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking nearby 20€. Metro: Urquinaona. Bus: 17, 19, or 45. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service; Wi-Fi (11€ per 24 hr., in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar.

HUSA Oriente Renovations have improved this somewhat faded tourist hotel, but it lacks the character of its former glory. Right on the bustling Les Rambles, it was once one of the original "grand hotels" of Barcelona and attracted a number of famous people. There's even an apocryphal tale that Errol Flynn once passed out drunk at the bar, was carried to his room, and stripped by two bartenders. His nude body was then exhibited to hotel guests. Nothing half so interesting happens today among the frugal travelers who flock here. Rooms are simply though comfortably furnished. You get the basics with relatively modern pieces, but little more.

La Rambla 45, 08002 Barcelona. www.hotelhusaoriente.com. ✆ **93-302-25-58.** Fax 93-412-38-19. 142 units. 75€–152€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking 30€. Metro: Liceu. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (11€ per 24 hr.).

Market Hotel & Restaurant ★ 🎁 This quiet, stylish hotel, charging affordable prices, lies in a tranquil neighborhood about a 15- to 20-minute walk to the center. The hotel takes its name from the neighboring San Antonio Market, the first market to open outside the city walls. The hotel is cosmopolitan and full of character, with sophisticated decorative touches and comfort, including polished hardwood floors, Asian lacquered furnishings, and bathrooms in black tile. Guest rooms are large, and some of them open onto private terraces. An excellent market-oriented Catalán restaurant lies downstairs.

Passatge Sant Antoni Abad 10 (at the corner of Comte Borrell), 08015 Barcelona. www.forkandpillow.com. ✆ **93-325-12-05.** Fax 93-425-29-65. 46 units. 88€–183€ double; 108€–199€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 25€. Metro: Sant Antoni. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Mesón Castilla ★ 🏷 This charming, well-maintained hotel, a former apartment building, has a Castilian facade with a wealth of Art Nouveau detailing. Owned and operated by the Spanish hotel chain HUSA, it certainly has a fantastic location, right in the center of the city, close to Les Rambles. Its nearest rival is the Regencia Colón, to which it is comparable in atmosphere and government ratings. It is far superior to the Cortés and the Continental. The midsize rooms are comfortable—beds have ornate Catalán-style headboards—and some open onto large terraces.

Valldoncella 5, 08001 Barcelona. www.mesoncastilla.com. ✆ **93-318-21-82.** Fax 93-412-40-20. 56 units. 103€–162€ double; 118€–179€ triple. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya or Universitat. **Amenities:** Babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Soho Hotel ★★ Innovative and minimalist, this nugget of a boutique hotel was the creation of some of Europe's best designers and architects, notably the award-winning Barcelona-born Alfredo Arribas. Interior design touches were also added by Franc Aleu, who reproduces various parts of the human body on the walls. Look for other such designer frills as globelike Verner Panton lamps. The beds offer super comfort, as do the natty glassed-in bathrooms; the best rooms are on the seventh floor, complete with wood-decked terraces. Rooms on the lower level can be noisy because of heavy Gran Vía traffic. On an August day, the cool rooftop plunge pool is idyllic.

Gran Vía 543. www.hotelsohobarcelona.com. ✆ **93-552-96-10.** Fax 93-552-96-11. 51 units. 65€–168€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor heated pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hostal Gat Xino ★ 🏷 This budget hotel is part of a pioneering chain that gives face-lifts to hostels, turning them into comfortable oases that rent at affordable prices. "Gat" is Catalán for cat, incidentally. One of the chic color schemes involves acid apple greens combined with black trim, and the overall look is modern and inviting. There's a roof terrace, for siestas in the sun and for the daily Mediterranean-style buffet at lunchtime. The Gat is just a 2-minute walk from Les Rambles.

Calle Hospital 149–155, 08001 Barcelona. www.gatrooms.com. ☎ **93-324-88-33.** Fax 93-324-88-34. 35 units. 57€–91€ double; 67€–120€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Liceu. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (6.50€ per hr.).

Hotel Chic & Basic Born ★ 🎁 What IKEA did for home decorating in Europe and the U.S.—bringing stylish modernism to the masses—the Chic & Basic chain has done for lodging. This Barcelona version, set dead center in the youth-oriented nightlife scene of Born-Ribera, strikes a nothing-to-hide design tone from doorless closets to the crystal-clear shower stall in the middle of the mostly white room. Rooms are sized like clothing: M, L, and XL. Absinthe and the absence (of color) combine downstairs in the albino decor of the **White Bar.** The hotel seems to be trying a little too hard, but at these prices, the forced design elements can be overlooked. Most rooms are on the low end of the price range.

Carrer Princesa 50, 08010 Barcelona. www.chicandbasic.com. ☎ **93-295-45-62.** 31 units. 79€–145€. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Metro: Jaume I. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

L'Eixample

VERY EXPENSIVE

Claris ★★ This postmodern lodging at the north end of town is a posh, grand luxe property that incorporates vast quantities of teak, marble, steel, and glass behind the facade of a landmark 19th-century building (Verdruna Palace). Opened in 1992 to make a big splash in time for the Olympics, the seven-story structure has a swimming pool and garden on its roof and a museum of Egyptian antiquities from the owner's private collection on the second floor. The blue-violet guest rooms contain state-of-the-art electronic accessories as well as unusual art objects—Turkish kilims, English antiques, Hindu sculptures, Egyptian stone carvings, and engravings. The spacious, soundproof rooms are among the most opulent in town, with wood marquetry and paneling, custom furnishings, and some of the city's most sumptuous beds.

Carrer de Pau Claris 150, 08009 Barcelona. www.hotelclaris.com. ☎ **800/888-4747** in the U.S., or 93-487-62-62. Fax 93-215-79-70. 120 units. 135€–525€ double; 245€–3,150€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; concierge; exercise room; outdoor heated pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Granados 83 ★★ This hotel epitomizes the sophisticated modern design for which Barcelona is justly acclaimed. A short walk below the Diagonal, and ideal for discovering l'Eixample, the hotel is named for celebrated composer and pianist Enric Granados. It was created from a former hospital dating from the early 20th century and converted into today's establishment of reinterpreted Art Deco style. Its rusted iron structure evokes the old lofts of New York's SoHo district, and stands in contrast to the stone-and-glass facade. Minimalist decoration provides a subdued elegance—the hotel is a bastion of Zen tranquillity with Hindu and Buddhist art. Bedrooms have a masculine cast, thanks to such materials as iron and brick along with natural leather, white marble, rare zebrawood, and tamarind wood. The rooftop pool is a magnet in the summer, and the on-site restaurant with its savory Mediterranean cuisine is a delight year-round.

Carrer Enric Granados 83, Eixample, 08008 Barcelona. www.derbyhotels.com. ✆ **93-492-96-70.** 77 units. 110€–430€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Omm ★★ In the fashionable Passeig de Gràcia district, Grupo Tragaluz, owner of some of Barcelona's finest gourmet restaurants, operates this nugget of a hotel. The Omm features one of the most sophisticated modern designs in the city, the work of some of Spain's best architects and interior designers. The hotel was designed so that guests could enjoy the view across the street to Gaudí's La Pedrera (p. 449), considered one of the Catalán architect's most celebrated masterpieces. The smooth textures and light tones of the hotel rooms create a tranquil, comfortable, and relaxing atmosphere. As part of the trendy design, bathrooms are open to sunlight. Varnished aluminum cabinets set a high tone for the interior decor. Special features include a rooftop pool and **Moo** (p. 466), one of Barcelona's finest hotel dining rooms.

Rosselló 265, 08008 Barcelona. www.hotelomm.es. ✆ **93-445-40-00.** Fax 93-445-40-04. 91 units. 199€–360€ double; 440€–660€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 32€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; rooftop heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Mandarin Oriental ★★★ This chain hotel took a relatively dull 1950s building and transformed it into one of the deluxe citadels of Barcelona. Its luxuriously furnished and equipped guest rooms (including some 52 exquisitely designed suites) are among the most lavish in the city. The Mandarin also boasts one of Barcelona's most elegant spas. Many of the units overlook the hotel's gardens, which can be viewed from private terraces. Other deluxe rooms overlook the Passeig de Gràcia. A special feature of the hotel is a panoramic rooftop terrace with dipping pool, and alfresco dining is also a highlight.

Passeig de Gràcia, 08007 Barcelona. www.mandarinoriental.com/barcelona. ✆ **93-151-88-88.** Fax 93-151-88-89. 98 units. 295€–525€ double; from 655€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 45€. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; airport transfers (150€); concierge; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (26€ per 24 hr.).

EXPENSIVE

Avenida Palace ★ In an enviable 19th-century neighborhood filled with elegant shops and apartment buildings, this hotel stands behind a pair of mock fortified towers. Despite its relative modernity (it dates from 1952), it evokes an old-world sense of charm, thanks partly to the attentive staff and partly to the flowers and antiques scattered throughout. Guest rooms are solidly traditional and quiet. The soundproof rooms range from midsize to spacious, with comfortable beds and mostly wood furnishings.

Gran Vía de les Corts Catalánes 605 (at Passeig de Gràcia), 08007 Barcelona. www.avenidapalace.com. ✆ **93-301-96-00.** Fax 93-318-12-34. 151 units. 122€–189€ double; 186€–770€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (95€); babysitting; bikes; concierge; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Casa Fuster ★★ 🎁 One of the city's grandest *modernisme* buildings, a former private home designed by Lluís Domenech i Montaner for the Fuster family, has been turned into one of Barcelona's finest addresses, thanks to an $80-million investment. When it was first built in 1908, the use of high-quality marble made Casa Fuster the most expensive residence in the city. Today it is a five-star deluxe hotel. The glory days of the Belle Epoque live again in the palette of magenta, mauve, and taupe. Many of the beautifully furnished bedrooms contain private balconies that open onto Passeig de Gràcia. The **Café Vienés,** once a meeting place for literati, now serves as a posh late-hours jazz club.

Passeig de Gràcia 132, 08008 Barcelona. www.hotelcasafuster.com. ✆ **93-255-30-00.** Fax 93-255-30-02. 96 units. 173€–270€ double; 270€–322€ junior suite; from 648€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 33€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (99€); babysitting; concierge; exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor heated pool; room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hispanos Siete Suiza 🎁 This is a fantastic little discovery lying about a block from the landmark Sagrada Família and its nearby Metro stop. Every detail of the hotel seems to have been planned well in advance, right down to the antique cars in the lobby. Units are like little apartments or junior suites, each with a completely equipped kitchen and such features as daily cleaning and a hydromassage shower. On-site is a sophisticated restaurant, **Cúpula,** serving an inventive international cuisine.

Sicilia 255, 08025 Barcelona. www.hispanos7suiza.com. ✆ **93-208-20-51.** Fax 93-208-20-52. 19 units. 54€–300€ double; 110€–330€ triple. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Sagrada Família. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, kitchen, minibar.

Hotel Sixty-Two ★ This elegant and restored 19th-century facade along Passeig de Gràcia provides no hint of the contemporary minimalist retreat inside. You're far removed from the hustle and bustle of Barcelona, yet you're located in the very heart of the city, convenient to art, culture, shopping, and leisure activities. Stylistas meet in the Zeroom Breakfast Bar and Library for fresh-squeezed blood-red orange juice and perfect coffee. Treat the hotel's "Ask Me" service as a genie in a bottle, providing the kind of assistance you would usually expect from a concierge at a more expensive lodging. Public rooms are graced with Asian touches like bamboo planters and an Eastern-vibe garden. Bedrooms are Japanese inspired, sleekly elegant, and spacious.

Passeig de Gràcia 62, 08007 Barcelona. www.sixtytwohotel.com. ✆ **93-272-41-80.** Fax 93-272-41-81. 45 units. 99€–256€ double; 262€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 28€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; bikes; concierge; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Pulitzer ★★ 🎁 With its high-concept modern design, attractive guest rooms, and welcoming sense of comfort, this fashionable boutique hotel stands out in an area that is often marred by heartless stark commercial lodgings. Located right off the Plaça de Catalunya, Pulitzer boasts a rooftop bar that opens onto panoramic views of Les Rambles and the Barri Gòtic. White-leather sofas and black-marble trim grace the public areas, and there are such touches as a comprehensive library and private patio. The bedrooms are decorated in tones of charcoal gray, squid-ink black, and stark white, and some of them are a bit cramped. But even the humblest unit here has a bit of flair, with leather, silk, glamorous fabrics, and state-of-the-art bathrooms.

Bergata 8, 08002 Barcelona. www.hotelpulitzer.es. ☎ **93-481-67-67.** Fax 93-481-64-64. 91 units. 109€–160€ standard double; 120€–200€ superior double; 240€–390€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (80€); babysitting; bikes; concierge; exercise room; access to nearby health club; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Axel 🎁 Your heart doesn't have to be young and gay to check in here, but you'll feel more at home if you are. (The hotel bills itself, however, as "hetero-friendly.") Cutting-edge architectural designs and a liberal, cosmopolitan atmosphere prevail at this chic bastion of comfort and charm. It's been awarded "Best Hotel" by *outTraveler* magazine, and that award-winning standard of hospitality still prevails. Hotel-savvy travelers, gay and straight alike, view Axel as a unique address. You might meet your next flame at the rooftop pool and sun deck, or perhaps in the hip cocktail bar or lobby restaurant. Bedrooms are midsize and soundproof, with king-size beds. Squishy pillows and little touches like erotic art set a tone that is arousing or romantic, depending on your taste.

Aribau 33, 08011 Barcelona. www.axelhotels.com. ☎ **93-323-93-93.** Fax 93-323-93-94. 105 units. 79€–209€ double; 129€–229€ superior double; 239€–319€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 21€. Metro: Universitat. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; airport transfers (117€); health club and spa; outdoor heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Cram ★ 🎁 Clearly the name of this hotel means something else in Catalán, as the hotel itself has nothing of the crassness implied by the name in English. Guests tend to be a hip crowd in their 30s and 40s who enjoy the bravado of textured red-leather walls, glossy black surfaces, and contoured furniture such as Eames chairs. The hotel opened in 2005 in a restored, architecturally beautiful 19th-century building. The architects kept the facade but turned the interior into a modern palace of convenience and comfort. The bedrooms have mirrored walls, amber-wood floors, and sophisticated color schemes such as mustard yellow and saffron. The location is good, too, right in the center of Barcelona, just 4 blocks from the Passeig de Gràcia and an easy walk from Les Rambles. To the delight of both guests and nonguests, restaurant **Gaig** has taken up residence here as well.

Aribau 54, 08011 Barcelona. www.hotelcram.com. ☎ **93-216-77-00.** Fax 93-216-77-07. 67 units. 116€–268€ double; 200€–422€ executive and privilege units; 280€–515€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 15€. Metro: Universitat. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; concierge; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, movie library, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Advance Design Collection Barcelona ★ 🎁 In the heart of Barcelona, only a 3-minute walk from Les Rambles, this hotel was created from a restored 19th-century structure in historic l'Eixample. Its guest rooms and facilities live up to the hotel's name. The stylish bedrooms with tasteful furnishings are comfortable and spacious. The entire hotel, in fact, is sleek and sophisticated throughout. Thirty of its bedrooms open onto private balconies overlooking the action of this bustling city, and six open onto their own private terraces. ***Note:*** The hotel bills itself as gay-friendly.

Calle Sepúlveda 180, 08011 Barcelona. www.hotenco.com. ✆ **93-289-28-92.** Fax 93-289-30-24. 36 units. 82€–173€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking nearby 20€. Metro: Urgell. **Amenities:** Breakfast room. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

BCN Fashion House B&B 🎁 B&Bs aren't typical in Barcelona, but this boutique hotel with shared bathrooms may be a trendsetter. The gay-friendly house is situated in the heart of l'Eixample, a few minutes' walk from La Pedrera and only 3 blocks off Plaça de Catalunya. In a restored 19th-century building, Fashion House has been converted to receive and house guests in comfort. Decorated with stucco and friezes, the B&B evokes a homey aura. Bedrooms are attractively furnished, each cheerily decorated with pastels, and the finest units open onto little verandas. The most spacious unit is La Suite, a self-catering apartment big enough for a family and the only unit with a private bathroom. In summer, breakfast is served on a communal terrace. A 2-night minimum is required year-round.

Bruc 13 Principal, 08010 Barcelona. www.bcnfashionhouse.com. ✆ **63-790-40-44.** Fax 93-165-15-60. 8 units. 50€–104€ double; 60€–104€ triple; 90€–135€ suite. MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Urquinaona. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV (in suite only), kitchenette (in suite only).

Hostal Girona 🏷 Imbued with atmosphere and character, this modestly priced *hostal* dates from the 1860s, when the *modernisme* architect Ildefons Cerada designed it. Today it's a nostalgic choice and has been completely restored and made suitable to receive guests. However, some of its units still lack a private bathroom. Bedrooms are simply but comfortably furnished, and several contain small private balconies opening onto the street or onto a tranquil rear courtyard.

Carrer Girona 24 (piso 1, puerta 1), 08010 Barcelona. www.hostalgirona.com. ✆ **93-265-02-59.** Fax 93-265-85-32. 19 units (10 with private bathroom). 50€–68€ double without bathroom; 50€–88€ double with bathroom. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 20€. Metro: Girona or Urquinaona. **Amenities:** Concierge. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Astoria ★ 🏷 An excellent value, the Astoria is near the upper part of Les Rambles and Diagonal. Built in 1952, it has an Art Deco facade that makes it appear older than it is. The high ceilings, geometric designs, and brass-studded detail in the public rooms could be Moorish or Andalucían. Modernist sculpture fills the lounge where guests meet each other over coffee. The comfortable, midsize guest rooms are soundproof and contain slick louvered closets and glistening white paint.

París 203, 08036 Barcelona. www.derbyhotels.es. ✆ **93-209-83-11.** Fax 93-202-30-08. 114 units. 70€–140€ double; 170€–265€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 25€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (16€ per 24 hr.).

Norte Diagonal

MODERATE

Gallery Hotel ★ 🎁 This is a winning, modern choice lying between the Passeig de Gràcia and La Rambla de Catalunya. The name, Gallery, comes from its location close to a district of major art galleries. The stylishly decorated hotel lies in the upper district of l'Eixample, just below Diagonal. Guest rooms are midsize for the most part and tastefully furnished. The on-site restaurant is known for its savory Mediterranean cuisine.

Calle Rosello 249, 08008 Barcelona. www.galleryhotel.com. ✆ **93-415-99-11.** Fax 93-415-91-84. 115 units. 139€–193€ double; 200€–406€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Wilson Boutique Hotel This well-run hotel stands in an architecturally rich neighborhood. The small lobby isn't indicative of the rest of the building; the second floor opens into a large, sunny lounge. The guest rooms are well kept, generally spacious, and furnished in a modern minimalist style with parquet floors.

Av. Diagonal 568, 08021 Barcelona. www.wilsonbcn.com. ✆ **93-209-25-11.** Fax 93-200-83-70. 53 units. 65€–130€ double; 95€–175€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Diagonal. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Moll de Barcelona

EXPENSIVE

Eurostars Grand Marina Hotel ★★ Evoking New York's iconic Guggenheim Museum with its circular, upside-down wedding cake design, the Grand Marina stands next to Barcelona's World Trade Center. The hotel attracts businesspeople, bankers, and conventioneers, although it's equally suitable as a vacation hotel. Standing at the end of a long pier that juts into the Barcelona harbor, its windows have panoramic views of the harbor and the cityscape. The Barri Gòtic is about a 20-minute walk away, although most guests take a taxi. The eight-floor hotel offers spacious, well-furnished guest rooms, with private terraces in some units. Elegant decoration, soothing colors, and luxurious woods and fabrics characterize the hotel. Guest rooms feature high-tech audiovisual equipment and top-notch bathrooms.

Moll de Barcelona s/n, 08039 Barcelona. www.grandmarinahotel.com. ✆ **93-603-90-00.** Fax 93-603-90-90. 278 units. 130€–280€ double; 271€–373€ junior suite; from 346€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. Metro: Drassanes. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; Jacuzzi; small outdoor heated pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel 54 ★ In the increasingly fashionable former fishermen's village of La Barceloneta, this boutique hotel occupies the former home of the Association of Fishermen—giving it panoramic views of the harbor and skyline. It stands in front of Port Vell, close to Playa San Sebastián and within an easy walk of Les Rambles. Elegantly modern following a major renovation, the hotel has such decorative touches as LED mood lighting (bedrooms have a lighting system allowing you to "personalize" your choice of color) and green-glass sinks in the bathrooms.

Passeig Joan de Borbó 54, 08003 Barcelona. www.hotel54barceloneta.com. ✆ **93-225-00-54.** Fax 93-225-00-80. 28 units. 51€–140€ double. MC, V. Nearby parking 20€. Metro: Barceloneta. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Vila Olímpica

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hotel Arts ★★★ This hotel occupies 33 floors of one of the tallest buildings in Spain, and one of Barcelona's few skyscrapers. (The upper floors of the 44-floor postmodern tower contain private condominiums of some of the country's most gossiped-about aristocrats and financiers.) The hotel is about 2.5km (1½ miles) southwest of Barcelona's historic core, near the sea and the Olympic Village. Its decor is contemporary and elegant. The spacious, well-equipped guest rooms have built-in furnishings, generous desk space, and large, sumptuous beds. Clad in pink marble, the deluxe bathrooms come with fluffy robes, dual basins, and phones. Views take in the skyline and the Mediterranean, and the hotel possesses the city's only beachfront pool. The young staff is polite and hardworking, the product of months of Ritz-Carlton training.

Carrer de la Marina 19–21, 08005 Barcelona. www.ritzcarlton.com. ☎ **800/241-3333** in the U.S., or 93-221-10-00. Fax 93-221-10-70. 483 units. 250€–404€ double; 475€–7,000€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 38€. Metro: Ciutadella–Vila Olímpica. **Amenities:** 5 restaurants; 2 bars; children's programs; concierge; exercise room; outdoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

EXPENSIVE

Pullman Barcelona Skipper ★ Lying only 50m (164 ft.) from the beach, this hotel is imbued with a stylish contemporary design, opening onto a view of a private interior garden. It stands next to the Arts Hotel at Port Olímpic. There are many luxurious touches and a lot of high-tech gadgets. Upon request, your bathtub can be filled with flower petals or salts. Showers are equipped with rain heads, the rooms are soundproof, the beds are draped in Egyptian cotton, and entire floors are reserved for nonsmokers. The executive junior suites are decorated in the style of modern yacht cabins, with a conceptual Japanese minimalism, evoking the spaciousness of a New York City loft.

Litoral 10, 08005 Barcelona. www.pullman-barcelona-skipper.com. ☎ **93-221-65-65.** Fax 93-221-36-00. 154 units. 220€–305€ double; from 680€ executive junior suite; from 919€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 26€. Metro: Ciutadella-Vila Olímpica. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 3 bars; airport transfers (116€); babysitting; bikes; concierge; health club and spa; 2 pools (outdoor); room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, TV/DVD player, CD player, hair dryer, minibar.

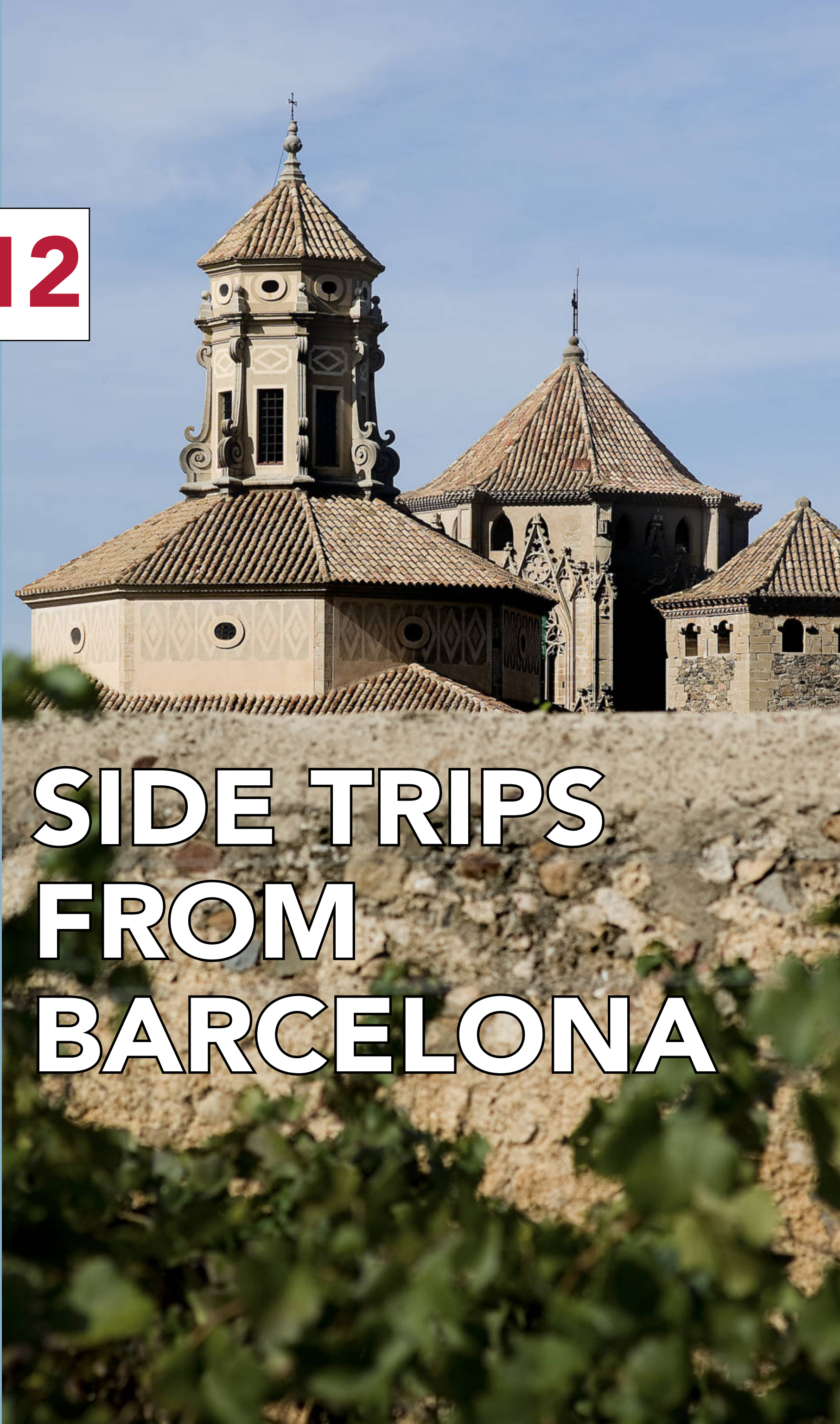
W Hotel Barcelona ★★ If you want to stay in a hotel with a panoramic sweep of Barcelona, this high-rise icon may be the best choice. Locals call this Hotel Vela (Hotel Sail), because the towering sail-shaped design makes it seem as if the building is about to head out to sea. The world-famous Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill created a landmark along the Barcelona waterfront with this masterpiece of avant-garde architecture where the Catalán sky is reflected in the facade of silvered glass. Spacious guest bedrooms come in a wide range of styles and prices, but each is imbued with a contemporary, sleek design, some with outdoor terraces, all with luxuriously comfortable furnishings and accessories, which are, in the words of one newspaper critic, "organically vibrant." From its deluxe spa to its state-of-the-art fitness center, the amenities abound at this winning stopover.

Placa de la Rosa dels Vents 1, 08039 Barcelona. www.w-barcelona.com. ☎ **93-295-28-00.** 473 units. 209€–365€ double; 330€–660€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 22€. Metro: Ciutadella-Vila Olímpica. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (19€ per 24 hr.).

Near the Airport

MODERATE

Hesperia Tower ★ The famous British architect Richard Rogers, who won the Pritzker Prize for architecture, created this high-tech modernist hotel with his trademark exoskeletal design. At 107m (351 ft.), the hotel is one of the tallest buildings in Catalunya, lying closer to the airport than to the city center. On its peak, it looks as if a spaceship has landed, but it's actually the deluxe 55-seat **Evo Restaurant,** presided over by Ismael Alegría. The bedrooms are dramatically furnished; you get the feeling of being on a luxurious ocean liner sailing the high seas. Gran Vía 144, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, 08907 Barcelona. www.hesperia.com. ☎ **93-413-50-00.** Fax 93-413-50-10. 280 units. 89€–178€ double; 199€–297€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; free airport transfers; babysitting; concierge; health club; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).



12

SIDE TRIPS FROM BARCELONA

You can take several noteworthy trips from Barcelona by traveling west and south of the city. The most popular excursion is to the Benedictine monastery of **Montserrat,** northwest of Barcelona. To the south, the Roman city of **Tarragona** is often neglected by visitors, but with its extraordinary ancient ruins and charming Old Town, it is a must-visit to understand the Roman legacy in Spain. Beach lovers of all gender identifications should enjoy the sybaritic pleasures of the resort town of **Sitges.**

This area is part of the autonomous region of Catalunya, which is also covered in the chapter on **Girona and the Costa Brava** (p. 528). The coastline south of Barcelona is known as **Costa Daurada** (**Costa Dorada** in Castilian), which translates as "Golden Coast." The largest of the beach resorts is Sitges, while nearby Tarragona is better known for its ancient history than its strands. The landscape of the Costa Daurada consists of outflow plain backed by small hills and an inland mountain range that ensures that the Mediterranean dominates the coastal climate. Consequently, the Costa Daurada is flat, with long, sandy beaches and mild, sunny weather for much of the year.

One popular stretch is **La Maresme,** extending 64km (40 miles) from Barcelona to the Río Tordera. Since the seaside road is slow, allow at least 2½ hours to cover it without stopping. Traveling the entire coastline from Barcelona to the Ebro River, a distance of 193km (120 miles), takes an entire day. Highlights along this coast include **Costa de Garraf,** a series of creeks skirted by the corniche after Castelldefels, Sitges, and Tarragona. One of the coast's most beautiful stretches is **Cape Salou,** south of Tarragona in a setting of pine woods.

Monastic Catalunya, on the other hand, could not be more different from the beach towns of the Costa Daurada. The mountains west and north of Barcelona were colonized in the Middle Ages by Cistercian monks from Burgundy, acting on behalf of the French king to establish a religious buffer zone between Christian Europe and Moorish Spain. Many a miracle transpired in these hills to win over the populace, and while the monasteries have outlived their usefulness as a buffer for Christianity, they retain both their history and their mystery.

The tour through this part of Catalunya begins at the **Sierra de Montserrat,** which has views that are more spectacular than those in any coastal location. Wagner used it as the setting for his opera *Parsifal.* The serrated outline made by the sierra's steep cliffs led the Catalàns to call it *montserrat* (saw-toothed mountain). Today it remains the religious center of Catalunya. Thousands of pilgrims annually visit the town's monastery to see the image of La Moreneta (the Black Virgin). The **Monestir de Poblet** in Tarragona is the other major monastery of Catalunya. It, too, is a world-class attraction and a significant producer of fine wine from the Pinot Noir grape.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Monestir de Poblet.**

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN CATALUNYA

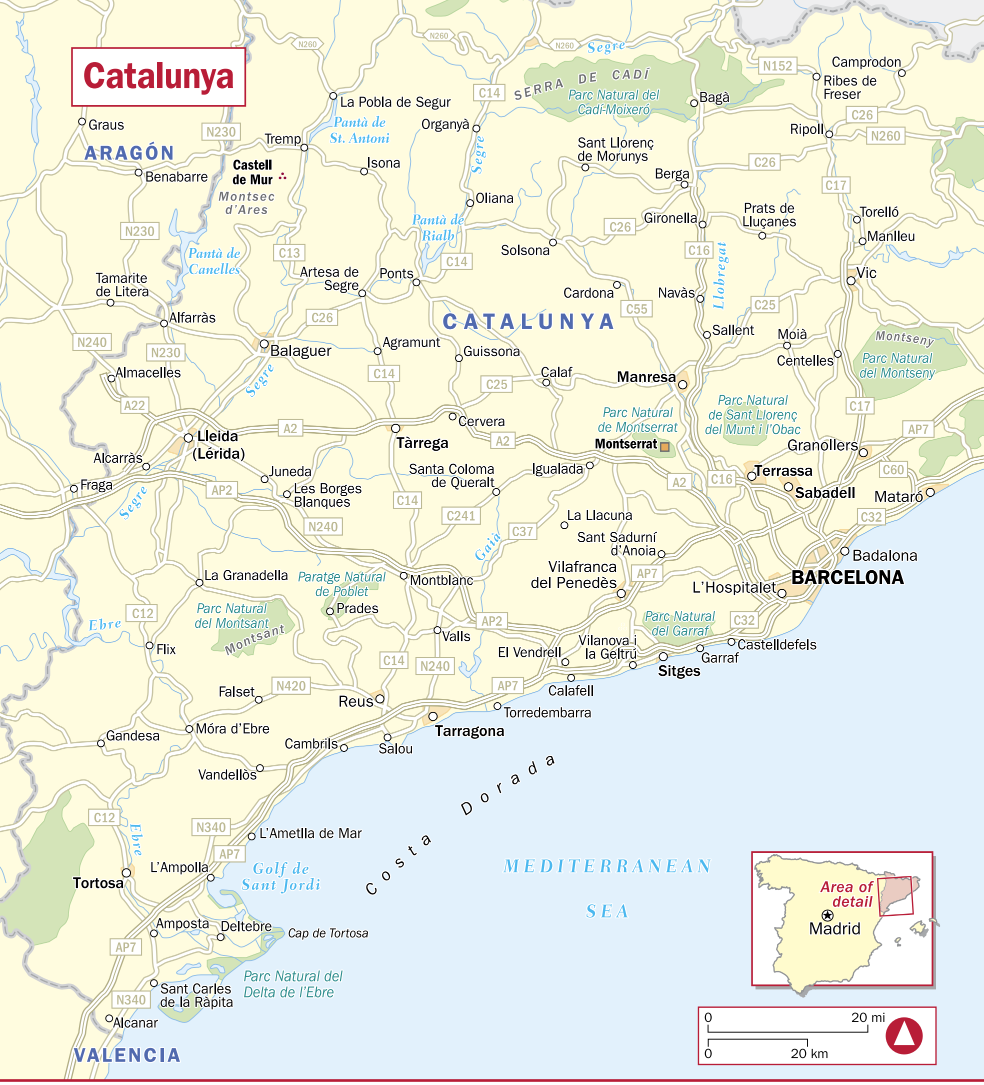
- **Catching some rays on the beach in Cambrils:** Costa Daurada towns south of Tarragona have gleaming golden beaches as well as rugged mountains just inland. Cambrils has the extra advantage of one of the most productive fishing fleets on the coast—and some of the best seafood restaurants.
- **Seeing Catalunya laid out below like a map:** The 9-minute funicular ride to the Montserrat monastery is exhilarating, but it is surpassed by the view from the mountain itself. You can see the hills and plains of Catalunya and all the way across the sea to Mallorca.
- **Walking among kings and queens:** Eight centuries of Aragónese and Catalán royalty rest under the great vaults below the church of the Monestir de Poblet. Less famous than El Escorial (p. 166), the carved sarcophagi and tombs of this necropolis recall the high and mighty. The ashes of Alfonso XIII, overthrown by Franco, were placed here when he died in exile in 1941.
- **Experiencing the grandeur of Roman Tarragona:** Walk down the passageway of the victorious charioteers at the Circus, or imagine the crowds calling for blood as gladiators battled in the amphitheater, high above the surf crashing on the shore. Ancient Rome persists in Tarragona's modern streets.
- **Enjoying suquet de peix at a seafront table in Sitges:** Sit back and face the sea while feasting on the seafood specialty of the Catalán coast, the rich fish stew called suquet de peix, seasoned with a blob of garlic-intense aioli.

MONTSERRAT ★★

56km (35 miles) NW of Barcelona, 592km (368 miles) E of Madrid

The monastery at **Montserrat,** which sits atop a 1,236m-high (4,055-ft.) mountain, 11km (6¾ miles) long and 5.5km (3½ miles) wide, is one of the most

The monastery at Montserrat.


Catalunya
ARAGÓN
CATALUNYA
VALENCIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Costa Dorada
BARCELONA
Lleida (Lérida)
Tarragona
Manresa
Montserrat
Area of detail
Madrid
0 20 mi
0 20 km

important pilgrimage spots in Spain—equal in significance to Zaragoza (p. 555), if not quite a dominant shrine equal to Santiago de Compostela (p. 674). Thousands travel here every year to see and touch the medieval statue of **La Moreneta** (the Black Virgin), the patron saint of Catalunya. Many newly married couples flock here for her blessing, and many name their daughters “Montserrat,” or “Montse” for short.

If you want to meet local people, visit on Sunday, especially when the weather is nice. Otherwise, you’ll find the rest of the week less crowded. Remember that the winds blow cold up here, even in summer, so visitors should bring along warm sweaters, jackets, or coats. In winter, thermal underwear is an excellent idea.

A JOURNEY TO andorra

You might never have heard of the tiny principality of **Andorra** ★★, sandwiched between Spain and France high in the eastern Pyrenees. Charlemagne gave this country its independence in A.D. 784, and with amused condescension, Napoleon let Andorra keep its autonomy. The principality is now ruled by two co-princes, the president of France, and the Spanish archbishop of La Seu d'Urgell.

Less than 464 sq. km (179 sq. miles) in size, Andorra is a storybook land of breathtaking scenery—cavernous valleys, snowcapped peaks, rugged pastureland, and deep gorges. It's long been popular for summer excursions and is also a winter ski resort.

Because of its isolation, Andorra retained one of Europe's most insular peasant cultures until as late as 1945. But since the 1950s, tourists have increased from a trickle to a flood—12 million every year, in fact. This has wreaked havoc on Andorra's traditional way of life and turned much of the country into one vast shopping center. Andorrans live almost entirely on earnings from tax-free shopping, along with the thriving ski market in the winter months.

Most people make their base in **Andorra-la-Vella** (in Spanish, Andorra-la-Vieja; see photo), or in the adjoining town, **Les Escaldes,** where there are plenty of shops, bars, and hotels. Shuttles run between the towns, but most shoppers prefer to walk. Many of the major hotels and restaurants line the main street of Andorra-la-Vella (Av. Meritxell) or the main street of Les Escaldes (Av. Carlemany).

But unless you've come just to shop, you'll want to get out into the countryside. Two nearby villages, **La Massana** and **Ordino,** can be visited by car or by bus (leaving about every 30 min. from the station in Andorra-la-Vella). Buses cross the country from south to north, and vice versa. The drive to Andorra takes you through some of the finest mountain scenery in Europe, with a backdrop of peaks, vineyards, and rushing brooks. From Barcelona, drive via Puigcerdà to La Seu d'Urgell. From

Essentials

GETTING THERE The best and most exciting way to get to Montserrat is via the Catalunyan railway, **Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya** (Manresa line), with 12 trains a day leaving from the Plaça d'Espanya in Barcelona. The central office is at Plaça de Catalunya 1 (www.fgc.es; ✆ **93-237-71-56**). The train connects with an aerial cableway (Aeri de Montserrat), which is included in the fare of 18€ round-trip.

The train, with its funicular tie-in, has become the preferred means of transport. However, a long-distance **bus** service is provided by **Autocars Julià** in Barcelona. Daily service from Barcelona to Montserrat is generally available, with departures near the Estació Central de Barcelona-Sants on Plaça de Països Catalánes. One bus makes the trip at 9:15am, returning at 5pm (6pm July–Aug); the round-trip ticket costs 13€. On Saturday and Sunday, the round-trip fare is 14€. Contact Autocars Julià at Santa Eulàlia 236 (www.autocaresjulia.es; ✆ **93-261-58-58**).

To drive to Montserrat, take the N-2 southwest of Barcelona toward Tarragona, turning west at the junction with the N-11. The signposts and

here, it's a quick 10km (6¼ miles) on the C-145 to the border of this principality, one of the world's smallest countries.

Although no one ever claimed that the Pyrenees are more dramatic than the Alps, they are, in fact, far more rugged. The climate of dry air is brisk in winter, and some of Europe's best skiing can be found here. Abundant snow usually lasts from November to April. **Pas de la Casa-Grau Roig** is the oldest resort, located just within the French border. Along with a slalom course, it has 18 trails for advanced skiers, some tame slopes for neophytes, and 25 lifts. The largest complex is **Soldeu-El Tarter,** with 28 slopes, 22 ski lifts, and a 12km (7½-mile) cross-country course. The resort of **Pals** features 20 trails, 14 lifts, and a forest slalom course. **Arinsal** offers 25 slopes serving both the experienced skier and the beginner. But the most beautiful and dramatic resort of all is **Ordino Arcalis,** with 11 lifts and 16 slopes. Many British visitors flock here in winter, as Andorran ski packages are, in general, far more reasonable than those offered in Switzerland or Austria.

Warning: Border guards check very carefully for undeclared goods.

exit to Montserrat will be on your right. From the main road, it's 15km (9⅓ miles) up to the monastery through eerie rock formations and dramatic scenery. Many people prefer to park below and take the funicular to the monastery.

The 9-minute **Sant Joan funicular ride** to the 1,236m-high (4,055-ft.) peak, makes for a panoramic trip. The funicular operates about every 20 minutes daily from 10:10am to 5:45pm in low season and to 7pm in summer. The cost is 8.50€ round-trip. From the peak, you'll see not only much of Catalunya but also the Pyrenees and the islands of Mallorca and Ibiza.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaça de la Creu (www.montserratvisita.com; ✆ **93-877-77-01**), is open daily from 9am to 5:30pm.

Exploring Montserrat

One of the monastery's noted attractions is the 50-member **Escolanía** ★★, one of the oldest and most renowned boys' choirs in Europe, dating from the 13th century. At 1pm daily you can hear them singing "Salve Regina" and the "Virolai" (hymn of Montserrat) in the **basilica** ★★★. The basilica is open daily from 8 to 10:30am and noon to 6:30pm. Admission is free. To view **La Moreneta (The Black Virgin),** the 12th-century polychrome carving of the Virgin and Child around which this entire complex was erected, enter the church through a side door to the right. The meter-high carving is mounted in a silver altar in a chapel high above the main altar. You will be in a long line of people who parade past the statue, which is behind bulletproof acrylic. There is a cutout so the faithful may kiss her extended hand.

At the Plaça de Santa María you can also visit the **Museu de Montserrat** (✆ **93-877-77-77**), known for its ecclesiastical paintings, including works by Caravaggio and El Greco. Modern Spanish and Catalán artists are also represented; you'll want to see Picasso's early *El Viejo Pescador* (1895). Works by Dalí and such French Impressionists as Monet, Sisley, and Degas are shown. The collection of ancient artifacts is quite interesting; make sure to look for the crocodile mummy, which is at least 2,000 years old. The museum has no active acquisition program—all the art comes from gifts of the faithful. The museum is open Monday to Friday from 10am to 5:45pm, charging 6.50€ adults, 5.50€ seniors, and 3.50€ for students and children 17 and under; it's free for kids 5 and under.

You can also make an excursion to **Santa Cova (Holy Grotto),** the alleged site of the discovery of La Moreneta. The grotto dates from the 17th century and was built in the shape of a cross. You go halfway by funicular, but must complete the trip on foot. The grotto is open daily from 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm. The funicular operates April through October every 20 minutes daily from 10am to 5:45pm, and November through March daily from 11am to 4:45pm. Note that it closes between 1 and 2pm. The round-trip fare is 3.50€.

Where to Stay & Eat

Few people spend the night here, but most visitors want at least one meal. If you don't want to spend a lot, buy a picnic in Barcelona or ask your hotel to pack a meal. If you do decide to spend the night at Montserrat, it is more atmospheric to stay on the mountain than in the modern town at its base.

Abat Cisneros This modern hotel on the main square of the Montserrat monastery village offers few pretensions and a history of family management since 1958. The small rooms are simple and clean, with comfortable beds and generous bathrooms. Many regional dishes of Catalunya are served at the in-house restaurant. The hotel's namesake was the great mystic Garcia de Cisneros, who was abbot of Montserrat at the opening of the 16th century and who established the monastery's influential printing operations in 1499.

Plaça de Monestir, 08199 Montserrat. www.barcelonahotels.es/es/hotel-abat-cisneros-32.htm. ✆ **93-877-77-01.** Fax 93-877-77-24. 56 units. 68€–112€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 7€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV.

TARRAGONA ★★

97km (60 miles) S of Barcelona, 554km (344 miles) E of Madrid

The ancient Roman port city of **Tarragona,** on a rocky bluff above the Mediterranean, is one of the grandest but most neglected sightseeing centers in Spain. Despite its Roman and medieval remains, it's merely the second-oldest city of Catalunya.

The Balcó del Mediterráni.

The Romans captured Tarragona (then called Tarraco) in 218 B.C., and during their rule the city sheltered up to a million people behind 64km-long (40-mile) city walls. It was the beachhead for colonizing the Iberian Peninsula and seat of the peninsula's eastern governance. It was also once the home of Julius Caesar. Tarragona today consists of an Old Quarter filled with interesting buildings, particularly the houses with connecting balconies. The upper walled town is mainly medieval, the town below newer.

In the New Town, walk along the main artery, **Ramble Nova,** a fashionable wide boulevard. Running parallel with Ramble Nova to the east is the **Ramble Vella,** which marks the beginning of the Old Town. The **Plaça de La Font** has city offices as well a lively cafe scene. Pop into the **Ayuntament** (City Hall) to see the *modernisme* ship-shaped tomb of Jaume I of Aragón (1208–76), the conqueror who brought together the political fates of Aragón and Catalunya. The city also has a now-unused bullring, good hotels, and even beaches. The Romans were the first to designate Tarragona a resort town.

After seeing the attractions listed below, cap off your day with a stroll along the **Balcó del Mediterráni (Balcony of the Mediterranean),** where the vistas are especially beautiful at sunset.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Daily, 43 **trains** make the 1- to 1¼-hour trip to and from the Barcelona-Sants station. There are no direct trains between Madrid and Tarragona; from Madrid, you have to go first to Barcelona, where you change trains for Tarragona. In Tarragona, the RENFE office is in the train station, Plaza Pedrera s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**).

From Barcelona, there are 10 **buses** per day to Tarragona (trip time: 1½ hr.); from Valencia, 10 buses (trip time: 3½ hr.); and from Alicante, 6 buses (trip time: 6½ hr.). Call ✆ **97-722-91-26** in Tarragona for more information.

remembering PABLO CASALS

Fleeing from Franco and the fascist regime, the world's greatest cellist, Pablo Casals, left his homeland in 1939. Today his body has been returned to his native El Vendrell, 72km (45 miles) south of Barcelona, where he is remembered by a museum in his honor. The museum is installed in the renovated house where he lived until he went into self-imposed exile.

The 17 rooms are filled with Casals memorabilia, including his first cello, photographs and films of his performances, the Peace Medal awarded him by the United Nations in 1971, and photographs of the artist with such famous men as John F. Kennedy, who awarded him the Medal of Freedom.

Casals died in Puerto Rico in 1973 at the age of 96, and he was finally returned to his beloved Catalunya in 1979, where he is buried at El Vendrell graveyard.

Casa Pau Casals is located at Av. Palfuriana 59–61, in El Vendrell (www.paucasals.org; ✆ **97-768-42-76**). From September 16 to June 14, it's open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. From June 15 to September 15, it's open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 9pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. Admission is 6€ for adults and 3€ for children. Allow 1 hour.

To reach El Vendrell from Barcelona, head southwest along A-19 until you come to C-246. Continue along this route, which will lead you into El Vendrell.

To drive, take the A-2 southwest from Barcelona to the A-7, and then take the N-340. The route is well marked. This is a fast toll road. The one-way cost of the toll road from Barcelona to Tarragona is 12€.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Major 39 (www.tarragonaturisme.es; ✆ **97-725-07-95**), is open July to September Monday to Saturday 10am to 8pm, Sunday 10am to 2pm; off-season hours are Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Tarragona

Amfiteatre Romà ★★ RUINS At the foot of Parc del Milagro (Miracle Park) and dramatically carved from a cliff that rises from the beach, this Roman amphitheater recalls the 2nd century, when thousands gathered here to watch gladiators and wild beasts struggle to the death, and to observe the executions of such enemies of the state as the Christian martyrs Sant Fructuosus and his deacons (A.D. 259). The church of Santa María del Miracle is the successor to the Visigothic church built on this site in memory of the martyrs.

Parc del Milagro. www.museutgn.com. ✆ **97-724-25-79.** Admission 3.50€ adults, 1.50€ students and seniors, free for children 16 and under. Easter–Sept Tues–Sat 9am–9pm, Sun 9am–3pm; Oct to the week before Easter Tues–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Closed Christmas Day, Dec 26, New Year's Day, and Jan 6. Bus: 2.

Catedral CATHEDRAL At the highest point of Tarragona is this 12th-century cathedral, whose architecture represents the transition from Romanesque to Gothic. It has an enormous vaulted entrance, fine stained-glass windows, Romanesque cloisters, and an open choir. In the main apse, observe the altarpiece of Sant Thecla, patron of Tarragona, carved by Pere Joan in 1430. Two flamboyant Gothic doors open into the east end of the church. The east gallery is the **Museu Diocesà,** with a collection of Catalán art.

Plaça de la Seu. ✆ **97-723-86-85.** Cathedral and museum 3.50€. Mar 16–May 30 Mon–Sat 10am–1pm and 4–7pm; June 1–Oct 15 Mon–Sat 10am–7pm; Oct 16–Nov 15 Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Nov 16–Mar 15 Mon–Sat 10am–2pm. Bus: 1.

Museu D'Art Modern de Tarragona ★ ART MUSEUM This museum was launched by the acquisition of all the works of the sculptor Julio Antonio that had been kept by his sisters. Since then the bequests have grown to take in many more Catalán artists, especially the painter Josep Sancho i Piqué and sculptors Santiago Costa i Vaqué and Salvador Martorell i Ollé. The museum was formed by combining three ancient buildings in the Old Town. It also displays a rich collection of photographs by some of the nation's best photographers.

Santa Anna 8. www.altanet.org/MAMT. ✆ **97-723-50-32.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 10am–8pm; Sat 10am–3pm and 5–8pm; Sun 11am–2pm.

Museu Nacional Arqueològic de Tarragona MUSEUM Overlooking the sea, the Archaeology Museum houses a collection of Roman relics—mosaics, ceramics, coins, silver, sculpture, and more. The outstanding attractions here are the mosaic ***Head of Medusa*** ★★, with its penetrating stare, and the 3rd century A.D. mural composed of 47 depictions of marine life. The museum is surprisingly evocative of daily life in ancient Tarraco.

Plaça del Rei 5. www.mnat.es. ✆ **97-723-62-09.** Admission 2.40€. June–Sept Tues–Sat 9:30am–8:30pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–May Tues–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–2pm. Bus: 8.

Passeig Arqueològic ★ RUINS At the far end of the Plaça del Pallol, an archway leads to this .8km (½-mile) walkway along the ancient ramparts, built by the Romans on top of gigantic boulders. The ramparts have been much altered

An outer wall of Tarragona's Amfiteatre Romà.

Theme Park Thrills

A 10-minute ride from the heart of Barcelona, **Port Aventura Amusement Park,** Port Aventura (www.portaventura.es; ✆ **97-777-90-90**), is Spain's biggest theme park. Universal Studios acquired a prime stake in it and plans to make it even larger. The park's vast 810 hectares (2,000 acres) will eventually become Europe's largest entertainment center. Since its inauguration in 1995, Port Aventura has become one of the Mediterranean's favorite family destinations.

The park is a microcosm of five distinct worlds, with full-scale re-creations of classic villages ranging from Polynesia to Mexico, from China to the old American West. It also offers a thrilling variety of roller coaster and white-water rides, all centered on a lake you can travel on the deck of a Chinese junk.

The park is open daily from the last Friday in March to the third Sunday in June 10am to 8pm (it often closes at 7pm). In summer, it is open daily from 10am to midnight. From the second Wednesday in Sept to January 6, it is open daily 10am to 7pm. It's closed at other times. Admission costs 44€ adults, 35€ children 4 to 10, and free for children 3 and under. The fee includes all shows and rides.

About half the trains on the Barcelona-Sitges-Tarragona line stop at Port Aventura. From Barcelona, the one-way trip takes 50 minutes and costs 8€. A taxi from the center of Tarragona to Port Aventura costs about 18€ one-way.

over the years, especially in medieval times and in the 1600s. There are scenic views from many points along the way.

El Portal del Roser. www.museutgn.com. ✆ **97-724-57-96.** Admission 3€. Oct–Mar Tues–Sat 9am–6:30pm, Sun and holidays 10am–3pm; Apr–Sept Tues–Sat 9am–9pm, Sun and holidays 9am–3pm. Bus: 2.

Where to Eat

Barquet ★ CATALÁN/SEAFOOD Just a 5-minute walk from the cathedral, this restaurant specializes in Catalán seafood dishes, including a number of rice and noodle plates. It opened in 1950 in the cellar of a relatively modern building and today is run by the third generation of its original owners. Within a pair of nautical-themed dining rooms, you can enjoy *sopa de pescados* (fish soup) Tarragona style, *romesco* (ragout) of sea bass with herbs, an assemblage of fried fish with toasted noodles called *fideos rossejats,* and several preparations of sole and hake. Grilled veal, chicken, and beef are also offered. The list of Spanish and Catalán wines will complement any meal. The staff is well trained, polite, and proud of its Catalán antecedents.

Calle Gasometro 16. www.restaurantbarquet.com. ✆ **97-724-00-23.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–28€; *menú degustación* 29€–46€. DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3:30pm; Tues–Sat 9–10:30pm. Closed Aug 15–Sept 15.

Les Coques ★★ 🎁 CATALÁN Positioned within an antique building whose ocher walls, wood paneling, and exposed masonry evoke a well-established, prosperous country inn, this excellent Catalán restaurant has been a favorite among locals since 1984. Sophisticated Les Coques specializes in fare from both land and sea, and does so exceedingly well. The selection of mushrooms, called *zetas,* can be prepared in almost any style and have a marvelously woodsy taste. They also prepare an excellent version of grilled baby octopus, and a wide array of roasts, grills, and stews. Among the meat selections are sirloin steak with Calvados and wild mushrooms, or roast baby goat with Rancio wine and foie gras sauce. The restaurant also provides 2 hours of free parking at four nearby lots.

Calle San Llorenç 15. www.les-coques.com. ✆ **97-722-83-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 13€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3pm and 9–11pm.

Les Voltes ★ 🏷 CATALÁN/SEAFOOD This showy modern restaurant sits within the vaults of Roman Circus Maximus. Chiseled stone from 2,300 years ago blends harmoniously with thick plate glass and polished steel surfaces. The large 250-seat restaurant offers a kitchen of skilled chefs turning out a flavorful and well-seasoned Catalán cuisine. The menu features time-tested favorites such as succulent baked lamb from the neighboring hills. *Rape* (monkfish) deserves special billing, served with roasted garlic in a cockle-and-mussel sauce. Although only available in late spring, the pricey shellfish assortment (40€ per person) is a memorable splurge on shrimp, lobster, and langostinos.

Carrer Trinquet Vell 12. www.restaurantlesvoltes.cat. ✆ **97-723-06-51.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 9€–20€; 3-course fixed-price menu 12€ (Tues–Fri). MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–3:30pm (July–Aug closed Sun at lunch); Tues–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Closed 2 weeks in Jan and 2 weeks in July.

Sol-Ric CATALÁN/INTERNATIONAL Many guests remember the attentive service here long after memories of the good cuisine have faded. Dating from 1859, the place has a rustic ambience replete with antique farm implements hanging from the walls. There's an outdoor terrace, as well as a central fireplace, usually blazing in winter. The chef prepares oven-baked hake with potatoes, tournedos with Roquefort, seafood stew, and several exotic fish dishes, among other specialties.

Vía Augusta 227. www.restaurantesolric.es. ✆ **97-723-20-32.** Main courses 12€–20€; fixed-price menus 26€–33€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 8:30–11pm. Closed Dec 20–Jan 30.

Shopping

You'll find a scattering of crafts shops throughout Tarragona's historic core, and a large number along the Ramble Nova. Any of them might provide a souvenir of your visit. But for the densest concentration of shops and boutiques, head for the **Centro Comercial Parc Central,** on Avinguda Roma. Although the focus here is a supermarket, the center has at least 40 other stores selling whatever clothing, sundries, and household goods you might need.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Rambla Nova contains a handful of sleepy-looking bars, any of which will serve a cup of coffee or bottle of beer throughout the day and evening.

You might try the cafe/bar **Pla La Seu,** Plaza de la Seu 5 (✆ **97-723-04-07**), which lies close to the cathedral. You can sit outside enjoying a drink while taking in the facade. In summer, live jazz is presented on Saturday and Sunday.

Concerts and theatrical productions are staged in the city's cultural centerpiece, **Teatro Metropol,** Rambla Nova 46 (✆ **97-724-47-95**). Because of the language barrier, you might skip theatrical events presented in Catalán in favor of musical and dance presentations.

Where to Stay

Ciutat de Tarragona ★★ Within the city, the sleek, modern hotel is the best Tarragona has to offer. The well-equipped, modern rooms are neat and streamlined. The location, in the bull's-eye center, means you can walk to most of the attractions in the historic core. The beaches, however, are about a 10-minute stroll from the hotel. Parc de la Ciutat, next to the hotel, is a good location for walking or jogging. The hotel also has the best facilities of any in-town competitor, including a small swimming pool among other features. The restaurant menu offers both international and traditional Catalán specialties.

Plaça Imperial Tarraco 5, 43005 Tarragon. www.sbhotels.es. ☎ **97-725-09-99.** Fax 97-725-06-99. 158 units. 68€–158€ double; from 110€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Bus: 8. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Astari Travelers in search of peace and quiet on the Mediterranean come to the Astari, which opened in 1959. This resort hotel on the Barcelona road offers fresh and airy (though rather plain) guest rooms. Most rooms are small, but each comes with a good bed and a well-maintained bathroom. The Astari has long balconies and terraces, one favorite spot being the outer flagstone terrace with its umbrella-shaded tables set among willows, orange trees, and geranium bushes. This is the only hotel in Tarragona with garage space for each guest's car.

Vía Augusta 95, 43003 Tarragona. www.hotelastari.com. ☎ **97-723-69-00.** Fax 97-723-69-11. 81 units. 57€–98€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 8€. Bus: 8. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Lauria ★ Less than a half block north of the town's popular seaside promenade (Passeig de les Palmeres), beside the tree-lined Ramble Nova, this simple hotel offers unpretentious clean rooms, each of which has been modernized. The rooms range from small to medium and are comfortably furnished. Rooms in back open onto views of the sea.

Rambla Nova 20, 43004 Tarragona. www.hotel-lauria.com. ☎ **97-723-67-12.** Fax 97-723-67-00. 72 units. 64€–80€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 19€. Bus: 8. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

HUSA Imperial Tarraco ★ About .4km (¼ mile) south of the cathedral, atop an oceanfront cliff whose panoramas with a sweeping view of both the sea and the Roman ruins, this convention hotel is one of the city's more glamorous lodgings. It was designed in the form of a crescent and has guest rooms that may angle out to sea and almost always include small balconies. The rooms, all with neat bathrooms, contain uncomplicated plain modern furniture. The public rooms display lots of polished white marble, Oriental carpets, and leather furniture.

Passeig Palmeras/Rambla Vella, 43003 Tarragona. www.hotelhusaimperialtarraco.com. ☎ **97-723-30-40.** Fax 97-721-65-66. 170 units. 60€–190€ double; 145€–230€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 7€. Bus: 1. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; concierge; outdoor pool; room service; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

THE beaches OF THE COSTA DAURADA

Running along the entire coastline of the province of Tarragona, for some 211km (131 miles) from Cunit as far as Les Cases d'Alcanar, is a series of excellent beaches and impressive cliffs, along with beautiful pine-covered headlands. In the city of Tarragona itself is **El Milagre** beach, and a little farther north are the beaches of **L'Arrabassade, Savinosa, dels Capellans,** and **Llarga.** At the end of the latter stands **La Punta de la Mora,** which has a 16th-century watchtower. The small towns of **Altafulla** and **Torredembarra,** both with their own castles, stand next to these beaches and have many hotels.

Farther north again are the two magnificent beaches of **Comarruga** and **Sant Salvador.** The first is particularly cosmopolitan; the second is more secluded. Last come the beaches of **Calafell, Segur,** and **Cunit,** all with modern tourist complexes. You'll also find the small towns of **Creixell, Sant Vicenç de Calders,** and **Clarà,** which are backed by wooded hills.

South of Tarragona, the coastline forms a wide arc that stretches for miles and includes **La Piñeda** beach. **El Recó** beach fronts the **Cape of Salou,** where, among its coves, hills, and hidden-away corners, many hotels are located. The natural port of Salou is nowadays a center for international tourism.

Continuing south toward Valencia, you next come to **Cambrils,** a maritime town with an excellent beach and an important fishing port. In the background stand the impressive Colldejou and Llaberia mountains. Farther south are the beaches of **Montroig** and **L'Hospitalet,** as well as the small town of **L'Ametlla de Mar,** with its small fishing port.

After passing the Balaguer massif, you eventually reach the delta of the River Ebro, a wide lowland area covering more than 483km (300 miles), opening like a fan into the sea. This is an area of rice fields crisscrossed by branches of the Ebro and by an enormous number of irrigation channels. There are also some lagoons that, because of their immense size, are ideal hunting and fishing grounds. Moreover, there are some beaches over several miles in length and others in small hidden estuaries. Two important towns in the region are **Amposta,** on the Ebro itself, and **Sant Carles de la Ràpita,** a 19th-century port town favored by King Carlos III.

The Costa Daurada extends to its most southwesterly point at the plain of **Alcanar,** a large area given over to the cultivation of oranges and other similar crops. Its beaches, along with the small hamlet of **Les Cases d'Alcanar,** mark the end of the Tarragona section of the Costa Daurada.

Side Trips from Tarragona

If you rent a car, you can visit two attractions within a 30- to 45-minute drive from Tarragona. The first stop is the **Real Monestir de Poblet ★★**, Plaça Corona d'Aragó 11, E-43448 Poblet (www.poblet.cat; ✆ **97-787-00-89**), 47km (29 miles) northwest of Tarragona, a UNESCO World Heritage site that is one of Spain's most evocative and atmospheric monasteries. Its most striking feature is the pantheon of the old kings of Aragón—a catacomb of royal tombs. The monastery is also surrounded by vast stretches of Pinot Noir grapes, originally introduced by Cistercian monks from Burgundy. The monastery's winery has been rebuilt by the Cordoniú group and is open for tours and sales.

Constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries, and still in use, Poblet's immense basilica reflects both Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles. Reestablished in 1940 as a Cistercian monastery after remaining vacant since 1835, Poblet is the largest Cistercian community in Europe. The monks pass their days writing, studying, working a printing press, farming, and helping restore the building, which suffered heavy damage during the 1835 revolution. Admission to the monastery costs 6.50€ adults, 3€ seniors and students. From March 15 to October 12, it's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 12:40pm and 3 to 6pm; October 13 to March 14, it's open daily 10:30am to 12:40pm and 3 to 5:30pm. Except for Monday, when no guide service is available, visits to the monastery usually include tours, mostly in Spanish but with occasional English translations. They depart at 75-minute intervals during the monastery's open hours.

About 4.8km (3 miles) farther along, you can explore an unspoiled medieval Catalán town, **Montblanch.** At its entrance, a map pinpoints the principal artistic and architectural treasures—and there are many. Walk, don't drive, along the narrow, winding streets.

SANT SADURNÌ D'ANOIA ★★

49km (30 miles) W of Barcelona, 579km (360 miles) E of Madrid

If you've been sipping your way around Barcelona at the champagne bars, you've probably become well acquainted with cava, the sparkling wine of Spain. Most of that wine is produced outside Barcelona in the Penedès wine region. It can be a pleasant day trip from the city to visit Sant Sadurnì, where the **tourist office,** Hospital 26 (www.turismesantsadurni.cat; ✆ **93-891-31-88**), provides a brochure that lists about 40 cellars open for visits and tastes, usually for a token fee or no charge. The tourist office is open Monday through Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm. Most cellars ask that you call ahead, which the tourist office will do for you. Some cellars are tiny operations that bottle just a few hundred cases of cava per year; others are some of the biggest wine producers in Spain. Many close on Friday and Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday. To get to Sant Sadurnì, hop an R4 commuter train from Plaça de Catalunya or Sants stations. They run about every half-hour from 5:30am until 11:15pm. The journey is about 45 minutes. The fare is 5.40€ each way.

Located at the edge of town across from the commuter rail station, the massive **Freixenet,** Joan Sala 2 (www.freixenet.es; ✆ **93-891-70-96;** reserve by phone or e-mail at enotourism@freixenet.es), pioneered distribution of cava as a less expensive alternative to champagne. Since large groups often tour the winery, much of the tour is via video and includes a heavy dose of marketing, complemented by a quick trip into the deep cellars to see aging bottles and—finally—a tasting. Count on spending about 2 hours. The cost is 6€ adults, 4€ seniors, 2€ ages 9 to 17. It's open daily 10am to 2:30pm and Monday to Thursday 4 to 7pm (afternoons 3:30–4:30pm in winter).

The other giant of Sant Sadurnì cava production, **Cordoníu ★★**, Avenida Jaume Codorníu (www.codorniu.es; ✆ **93-891-33-42;** reserve by phone or e-mail at reserves@codorniu.es), is worth visiting just to see the cathedral of cava built from 1895 to 1915 and designed by *modernisme* architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch. If you know Cordoníu from its entry-level cava, the tasting will open your eyes (and palate) to some extraordinary high-end selections. Allow at least 2 hours. The cost is 6€. It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 1pm.

You'll also want to eat while you're in town, and one of the best places to get a feel for the countryside cuisine while enjoying the local wines is **Cal Blay Vinticinc ★★**, Josep Rovira 27 (www.calblay.com; ✆ **93-891-00-32**). This self-styled "enogastronomic" restaurant in a 1905 *modernisme* wine cellar carries nearly all the several hundred wines and cavas made in Sant Sandurnì, and pairs dishes to match them. Make sure you haven't eaten for a while, and order either the full tasting menu (two appetizers, two light courses, fish, meat, cheese, and dessert for 60€) with a different wine for each dish, or the "lighter" 45€ *cupatges* menu (two appetizers, three courses and dessert) with four cavas. Either is a crash course in the gastronomy of the Alt Penedès. Entrees generally run 15€ to 19€. It's open Wednesday to Monday 1 to 4:30pm, with additional hours on Friday and Saturday 9 to 11pm.

SITGES ★

40km (25 miles) S of Barcelona, 596km (370 miles) E of Madrid

Sitges is one of the most popular resorts of southern Europe, the brightest spot on the Costa Daurada. It's especially crowded in summer, mostly with affluent, young northern Europeans, many of them gay. For years, the resort was filled with the prosperous Barcelona middle class, but the staid days of bankers and factory owners are long gone. Sitges today can be as youthful (and raucous) as Benidorm and Torremolinos farther south on the coast.

Sitges has long been known as a city of culture, thanks in part to resident artist, playwright, and bohemian mystic Santiago Rusiñol. The 19th-century *modernisme* (*modernista* in Castilian) movement took hold early in Sitges, and the town remained the scene of artistic encounters and demonstrations long after the movement waned. Sitges continued as a resort of artists, attracting such giants as Salvador Dalí and poet Federico García Lorca. The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) erased what has come to be called the Golden Age of Sitges. Although other artists and writers arrived in the decades to follow, none had the fame or the impact of those who had gone before.

Essentials

GETTING THERE RENFE (www.renfe.es) runs **trains** from Barcelona-Sants to Sitges; the 30-minute trip costs 3.50€. Call ✆ **90-232-03-20** in Barcelona for information about schedules. Four trains leave Barcelona per hour.

Sitges is a 45-minute drive from Barcelona along the C-246, a coastal road. An express highway, the A-7, opened in 1991. The coastal road is more scenic, but it can be extremely slow on weekends because of the heavy traffic, as all of Barcelona seemingly heads for the beaches.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Plaza Eduard Maristany 2 (www.sitgestur.cat; ✆ **93-894-42-51**). Year-round hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 4 to 6:30pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS The **Carnaval** at Sitges is one of the outstanding events on the Catalán calendar. For more than a century, the town has celebrated the days before the beginning of Lent. Fancy dress, floats, feathered outfits, and sequins all make this an exciting event. The party begins on the Thursday before Lent, with the arrival of the king of the Carnestoltes, and ends on Ash Wednesday, with the "Burial of a Sardine." Activities reach their jubilant best in the bars and clubs on Carrer Sant Bonaventura, where the gay and lesbian communities hold their own celebrations.

Exploring Sitges

The old part of Sitges used to be a fortified medieval enclosure. The castle is now the seat of the town government. The local parish church, called **La Punta (the Point)** and built next to the sea on top of a promontory, presides over an extensive maritime esplanade, where people parade in the early evening. Behind the church are the Museu Cau Ferrat and the Museu Maricel (see reviews for both below).

Most people are here to hit the beach. The beaches have showers, bathing cabins, and stalls; kiosks rent motorboats and watersports equipment. Beaches on the eastern end and those inside the town center are the most peaceful—for example, **Aiguadoiç** and **Els Balomins. Playa San Sebastián, Fragata Beach,** and the **"Beach of the Boats"** (below the church and next to the yacht club) are the area's family beaches. A young, happening crowd heads for the **Playa de la Ribera,** to the west.

All along the coast, women can and certainly do go topless. Farther west are the most solitary beaches, where the scene grows racier, especially along the **Playas del Muerto,** where two tiny nude beaches lie between Sitges and Vilanova i la Geltrú. A shuttle bus runs between the cathedral and Golf Terramar. From Golf Terramar, go along the road to the club L'Atlántida, and then walk along the railway. The first beach draws nudists of every sexual orientation, while the second is principally if not quite exclusively gay.

Beaches aside, Sitges has some choice museums, which really shouldn't be missed. ***Note:*** Following renovations, the museums reviewed below are set to reopen in 2012.

Museu Cau Ferrat ART MUSEUM The Catalán artist Santiago Rusiñol combined two 16th-century cottages to make this house, where he lived and worked; upon his death in 1931 he willed it to Sitges along with his art collection. More than anyone else, Rusiñol made Sitges a popular resort. The museum collection includes two

Sitges's beachside promenade.

Playa San Sebastián beach.

paintings by El Greco and several small Picassos, including *The Bullfight*. A number of Rusiñol's works are on display.

Carrer Fonollar. www.mnac.es. ✆ **93-894-03-64.** Admission 3.50€ adults, 2€ seniors and students, free for children 5 and under. Combination ticket for the 3 museums listed in this section: 6.40€ adults, 3.50€ students and children 6 and under. June 15–Sept Tues–Sat 9:30am–2pm and 4–7pm, Sun 10am–3pm; Oct–June 14 Tues–Sat 9:30am–2pm and 3:30–6:30pm, Sun 10am–3pm.

Museu Maricel ART MUSEUM Opened by the king and queen of Spain, the Museu Maricel contains art donated by Dr. Jesús Pérez Rosales. The palace, owned by American Charles Deering when it was built right after World War I, is made up of two parts connected by a small bridge. The museum has a good collection of Gothic and Romantic paintings and sculptures, as well as many fine Catalán ceramics. There are three noteworthy works by Santiago Rebull and an allegorical painting of World War I by José María Sert.

Carrer del Fonallar. ✆ **93-894-03-64.** Admission 3.50€ adults, 2€ seniors and students, free for children 5 and under. Admission included in combination ticket. (See Museu Cau Ferrat, above, for opening times.)

Museu Romàntic ("Can Llopis") ART MUSEUM This museum re-creates the daily life of a Sitges land-owning family in the 18th and 19th centuries. The family rooms, furniture, and household objects are most interesting. You'll find wine cellars downstairs and an important collection of antique dolls upstairs.

Sant Gaudenci 1. ✆ **93-894-29-69.** Admission (including guided tour) 3.50€ adults, 2€ seniors and students, free for children 5 and under. Admission included in combination ticket. Mon–Sat 10am–1pm and 3–6:30pm; Sun 10am–1pm.

Where to Eat

El Velero ★ SEAFOOD This is one of Sitges's leading restaurants, positioned along the beachfront promenade. The most desirable tables are found on the glass greenhouse terrace, opening onto the esplanade, though the restaurant inside is more glamorous. Chef Florencio Martínez is a devotee of the local catch, so he's likely to scratch items from the menu if he's not happy with what the fishermen bring in. Try a soup, such as clam and truffle or whitefish, followed by a main dish such as *paella marinera* (with seafood), salmon in pine nut sauce, or local line-caught *daurada* (gilthead bream) that's prepared in several different ways. It is especially good when grilled and served with a garlic-and-parsley sauce.

Passeig de la Ribera 38. www.restaurantevelero.com. ✆ **93-894-20-51.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–33€; fixed-price menu 48€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Sun 1:30–4pm; Tues–Sat 8:30–11:30pm.

Fragata ★ SEAFOOD This dining room has been a gastronomic showcase in Sitges since the go-go days of the 1960s, and it took a turn for the culinary vanguard when a new generation took over in 2005. The decor remains simple—lots of glass, crisp brown and taupe upholstery and linens, and a glassed-in, climate-controlled wine cave. Some of the most delectable seafood specialties in town are served here, including *suquet* (a seafood soup), cod salad, mussels *marinera,* several preparations of squid and octopus, plus flavorful meat dishes such as grilled lamb cutlets. The very best bet on any night except Sunday is the mixed grill of fresh fish (the fishermen don't go out on Sun).

Passeig de la Ribera 1. www.restaurantefragata.com. ✆ **93-894-10-86.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes 16€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–4:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm.

Mare Nostrum SEAFOOD Half the fun of dining here is sitting at one of the outdoor tables overlooking the waterfront. (You can see the water from the dining room, too, but it's not the same.) This landmark dates from 1950, when it opened in what had been a private home built in the 1890s. The menu includes a full range of seafood dishes, among them grilled fish specialties and steamed hake with champagne. The fish soup is particularly delectable. The chef prepares seven different rice dishes nightly. Next door, the restaurant's cafe serves ice cream, milkshakes, sandwiches, tapas, and three varieties of sangria, including one with champagne and fruit.

Passeig de la Ribera 60. www.restaurantmarenostrum.com. ✆ **93-894-33-93.** Reservations required. Main courses 15€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–4pm; Mon 8–11pm; Tues and Thurs–Sat 1–4pm and 8–11pm. Closed Dec 15–Feb 1.

Entertainment & Nightlife

One of the best ways to pass an evening in Sitges is to walk the waterfront esplanade, have a leisurely dinner, and then retire at about 11pm to one of the open-air cafes for a nightcap and some serious people-watching.

If you're uncomfortable socializing with people who aren't straight, you may have to hunt to find a bar that isn't predominantly gay. In fact, a map pinpointing the gay bars is distributed in the bars themselves and online at **www.gaysitgesguide.com**. The largest concentration is found on **Carrer Sant Bonaventura** in the center of town, a 5-minute walk from the beach (near the Museu Romàntic). Most open around 11pm.

Mediterráneo, Sant Bonaventura 6 (no phone), is the largest gay disco and bar. Located in a restored 1690s house just east of the Plaça d'Espanya, it sports a formal Iberian garden and sleek modern styling. Upstairs are pool tables and a covered terrace. On summer nights, the place is overflowing.

The aptly named **Man Bar,** Sant Bonaventura 19 (no phone), may be the raunchiest gay watering hole along the eastern coast of Spain, and it sports a hard industrial feel, with lots of chains, metal bars, and dim lighting to encourage cruising. Leather, rubber, and uniforms are the dress of choice, except on underwear nights. The bar closes in winter, but is open nightly the rest of the year from 11pm to 3:30am.

Other gay bars include **Bourbon's,** Sant Bonaventura 13 (www.bourbonsbar.com; ✆ **93-894-33-47**), with a predominantly youngish crowd. **El Horno,** Joan Tarrida 6 (✆ **93-894-09-09**), with slight leather overtones that grow more prominent as the night progresses, opens earlier, at 6:30pm, and also features a dark room.

Trailer, Angel Vidal 36 (www.trailerdisco.com; ✆ **93-894-04-01**), is the best place to end the night. Its Wednesday night foam parties (where the dance floor is covered shin-high in bubbles) are infamous along the coast. Thursday nights are men only. The 10€ cover includes a drink. It closes at 6am.

Where to Stay

Despite a building spree, Sitges just can't handle the large numbers of tourists who flock here in July and August. By mid-October just about everything—including hotels, restaurants, and bars—slows down considerably or closes altogether.

MODERATE

Best Western Hotel Subur Marítim ★ In a residential area on the seafront facing a good beach, this independent hotel booked through Best Western is only a 5-minute walk from the center. It's a winning choice, made up of a traditional Catalán building and a more modern functional structure. The interior is cozy, with a traditional Catalán decor of wood fittings and cast-iron adornments on doors and windows. The amply sized rooms are comfortably furnished and tastefully decorated, each with a balcony and neatly kept bathroom.

Passeig Marítim, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelsuburmaritim.com. ✆ **800/528-1234** in the U.S., or 93-894-15-50. Fax 93-894-04-27. 42 units. 60€–140€ double; 119€–340€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; outdoor freshwater pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Romàntic ★ 🎁 Comprising three beautifully restored 19th-century villas, this hotel is only a short walk from the beach and the train station. The romantic bar is an international rendezvous, and the public rooms are filled with artwork. You can have breakfast in the dining room or in a garden filled with mulberry trees. The guest rooms, reached by stairs, range from small to medium and are well maintained, with good beds and bathrooms with shower stalls. Overflow guests are housed in a nearby annex, Hotel de la Renaixença. Keep in mind that very few rooms have private baths.

Carrer de Sant Isidre 33, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelromantic.com. ✆ **93-894-83-75.** Fax 93-811-41-29. 60 units (57 with shared bathroom). 85€–128€ double with shared bathroom; 101€–128€ double with private bathroom. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. Parking nearby 25€. Closed Oct 15–Mar 31. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting. *In room:* Hair dryer.

Meliá Sitges ★ Designed with steeply sloping sides reminiscent of a pair of interconnected Aztec pyramids, this hotel dates from 1992, when it housed spectators and participants in the Barcelona Olympics. The hotel has a marble lobby with what feels like the largest window in Spain, overlooking a view of the mountains. Each midsize room comes with a large furnished veranda for sunbathing, and each bathroom has a tub/shower combo. Many guests are here to participate in the conferences and conventions held frequently in the battery of high-tech convention facilities. The hotel is about a 15-minute walk east of the center of Sitges, near the access roads leading to Barcelona.

Joan Salvat Papasseit 38, 08870 Sitges. www.melia-sitges.com. ☎ **800/336-3542** in the U.S., or 93-811-08-11. Fax 93-894-90-34. 307 units. 69€–185€ double; 136€–410€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 12 hr.).

San Sebastián Playa Hotel Opposite San Sebastián beach, this large hotel with its wedding-cake facade has been in operation since 1990 and is used by many tour packagers. The functional Art Deco interior is the most beautifully decorated of any hotel in Sitges. A lot of attention has gone into the guest rooms, which are spacious and comfortable, with modernized bathrooms. Each has a balcony opening onto the sea.

Calle Port Alegre 53, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelsansebastian.com. ☎ **93-894-86-76.** Fax 93-894-04-30. 51 units. 88€–199€ double; 174€–229€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Terramar ★ Facing the beach in a residential area of Sitges, about 0.8km (½ mile) from the center, this modern resort hotel with its balconied front evokes a many-tiered yacht. The interior, however, is designed in a classical Mediterranean style with marble floors and white walls. The spacious guest rooms are comfortable, with carpeted floors and colorful wall coverings.

Passeig Marítim 80, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelterramar.com. ☎ **93-894-00-50.** Fax 93-894-56-04. 209 units. 66€–146€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. Bus: 1. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; bikes; children's center; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; 2 outdoor tennis courts; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Galeón Hotel A leading choice only a short walk from both the beach and the Plaça d'Espanya, this well-styled hostelry blends a bit of the old Spain with the new. The small public rooms feel cozy; the good-size guest rooms, accented with wood grain, have a more streamlined air. Each unit comes with a comfortable bed, plus a simple but adequate bathroom.

Sant Francesc 44, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelsitges.com. ☎ **93-894-13-79.** Fax 93-894-63-35. 74 units. 77€–113€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Parking 15€. Closed Oct 20–Apr 30. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel El Cid El Cid's exterior suggests Castilla, and inside, appropriately enough, you'll find beamed ceilings, natural stone walls, heavy wrought-iron chandeliers, and leather chairs. The same theme is carried out in the rear dining room and in the pleasantly furnished guest rooms, which, though small, are still quite comfortable, with fine beds and bathrooms. Breakfast is the only meal served. El Cid is off the Passeig de Vilanova, in the center of town.

San José 39 bis, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelsitges.com. ☎ **93-894-18-42.** Fax 93-894-63-35. 77 units. 52€–83€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* No phone.

Hotel El Xalet ★ 🎁 Right in the town center, this little charmer (the name is pronounced like "chalet") is about a 10-minute stroll from the nearest good beach. A happy blend of contemporary comfort and traditional styling, the *modernisme* building dates from 1882, with both Gothic and Art Nouveau architectural adornments. Passersby may think it's a Gothic church because of its ornate stonework, intricate carvings, and towering spires. Antique mosaics and marble decorate the lobby and reception area. Grace notes are the small pool in the hotel's well-manicured gardens and an inviting roof terrace where you can order breakfast. The small to midsize guest rooms, done in pastel shades of salmon and yellow, are comfortably furnished. The summer-only restaurant serves succulent Catalán specialties.

Isla de Cuba 21, 08870 Sitges. www.elxalet.com. ☎ **93-811-00-70.** Fax 93-894-55-79. 12 units. 60€–90€ double; 80€–125€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; outdoor freshwater pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Subur This old-time favorite stands in a prominent position in the center of town on the seafront. The first hotel built in Sitges (in 1916), the Subur was torn down and reconstructed in 1960, and was last renovated in 1992. Its small rooms are well furnished, its bathrooms well equipped. Balconies open onto the Mediterranean. Unlike some others in the area, the hotel remains open year-round.

Passeig de la Ribera s/n, 08870 Sitges. www.hotelsubur.com. ☎ **93-894-00-66.** Fax 93-894-69-86. 95 units. 45€–126€ double; 54€–145€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 25€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

13

GIRONA & THE COSTA BRAVA

Costa Brava, the so-called "Wild Coast," is a 153km (95-mile) stretch of coastline—the northernmost Mediterranean seafront in Spain—beginning north of Barcelona at Blanes and stretching toward the French border. Although the region is often associated with the overdevelopment of Spanish beaches in the 1960s, much of the area retains the pre-exploitation beauty of a landscape where mountains seem to march out of the sea. Visit this area in May, June, September, or October, but try to avoid July and August, when tour groups from northern Europe book most of the hotel rooms.

Undiscovered little fishing villages along the coast long ago bloomed into resort towns. **Tossa de Mar** is the most delightful of them. **Lloret de Mar** is immensely popular but too commercial and overdeveloped for many tastes. The least spoiled spot is remote **Cadaqués,** a village of fishermen and the artists who enjoyed eating their catch. Some of the smaller villages make excellent stops.

If you want to visit the Costa Brava but simply can't secure a room in high season, consider taking a day trip by car from Barcelona or booking one of the daily organized tours that leave from that city. Allow plenty of time for the drive. In summer, traffic jams can be fierce and the roads between towns difficult and winding.

If you visit the coast in summer without a hotel reservation, you stand a better chance of getting a room in **Girona,** the capital of the province and one of the most interesting medieval cities in Spain. In fact, once you check in, you could forget about the beaches altogether.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES ON THE COSTA BRAVA

- **Being bedazzled and befuddled by an artist's last and greatest joke:** Salvador Dalí loved to put the public on, and his Teatre-Museu was his final joke on a world that took him seriously. As conceptual art, it is a brilliantly diverting and amusing environment.
- **Standing with Scipio Africanus at Empúries:** The Greeks set up the trading post, the Carthaginians took it over, but it took the master general and statesman Scipio to make Empúries the beachhead from which Rome would tame the Iberian Peninsula. From the late Roman villa, the entire Bay of Roses unfolds.
- **Wandering the medieval Call in Girona:** The Romans made Girona important, but the medieval Jews made Girona great. One of the largest remaining Jewish Quarters in Spain, the Call is an atmospheric warren of ancient stone houses and a reminder of what Spain lost in the Inquisition.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The high bluffs of Lloret de Mar.**

- **Winding down the mountain road to the teacup cove of Cadaqués:** The switchback road over the mountains of the Empordà provides astonishing, almost aerial views of the tiny former fishing village of Cadaqués—but only for the passengers, never for the driver.
- **Surveying a sybaritic beach resort from an ancient Roman headland:** Sweet Tossa del Mar has the geographic good luck of a superb beach tucked between two high headlands. The lighthouse and an ancient Roman villa perch on a point that offers the perfect vantage on the crowds bathing on the beach in the golden light.

GIRONA ★★

97km (60 miles) NE of Barcelona, 90km (56 miles) S of Perpignan, France

Founded by the Romans as a fortress to guard a key river crossing, **Girona** retains many key features of its Roman origins and its medieval glory as both a Moorish stronghold and as a flourishing Christian and Jewish city. Over the centuries, Girona has been besieged 25 times, giving it the sobriquet of "city of sieges." The most devastating was 1809, when Napoleon starved the city into submission.

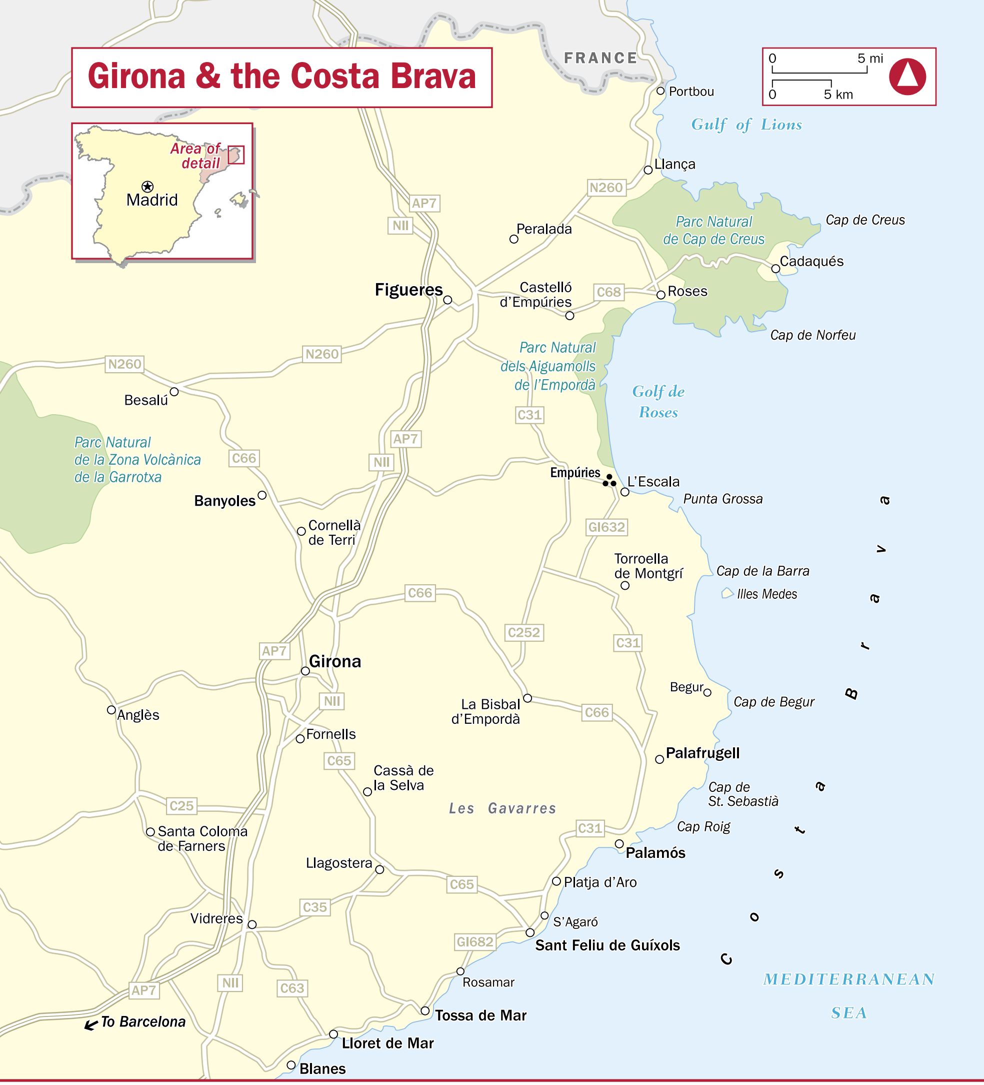
Split by the Río Onyar, this elegant and graceful city retains some traces of the Roman era, many of its medieval buildings, and some gorgeous 19th-century pastel houses along the riverfront. For orientation purposes, go to the ancient stone footbridge across the Onyar. From here, you have the finest view. Bring good walking shoes, as the only way to discover the particular charm of this medieval city is on foot. You can wander for hours through the labyrinthine medieval quarter (including the **Call,** or Jewish Quarter), with its narrow, steep alleyways and lanes and its ancient stone houses, which form a rampart chain along the Onyar.

Essentials

GETTING THERE More than 25 **trains** per day run between Girona and Barcelona from 6:10am to 9:30pm, including two TALGO trains. Trip time is 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the train. Tickets can run from 8€ to 28€ one-way. Trains arrive in Girona at the Plaça Espanya (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20** for information).

From the Costa Brava, you can take one of the SARFA **buses** (www.sarfa.com; ✆ **97-220-17-96** in Girona) to Girona. Three per day depart from Tossa de Mar (p. 542). Barcelona Bus (www.barcelonabus.com; ✆ **97-220-24-32** in Girona) also operates express buses between Girona and Barcelona at the rate of 6 to 13 runs per day, depending on the season and demand.

The alleys of the Call.

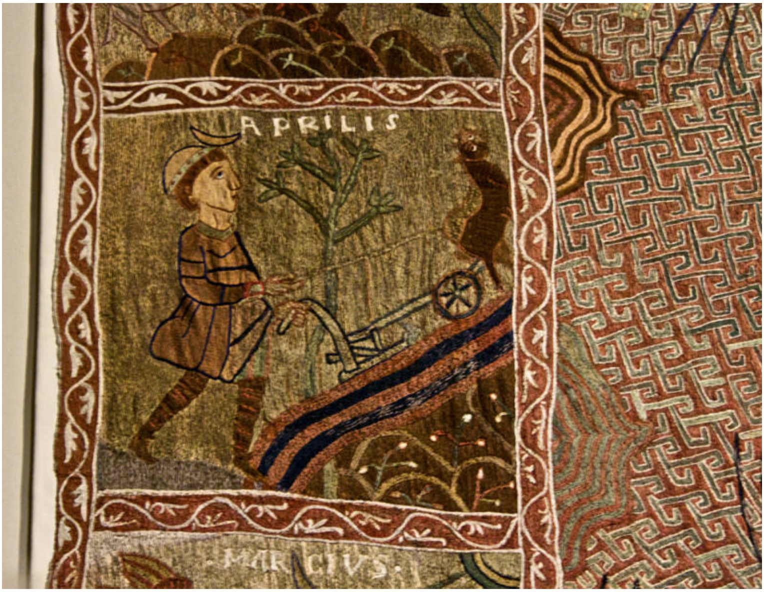

Girona & the Costa Brava
Area of detail
Madrid
FRANCE
0 5 mi
0 5 km
Portbou
Gulf of Lions
Llança
N260
AP7
NII
Peralada
Parc Natural de Cap de Creus
Cap de Creus
Cadaqués
Figueres
Castelló d'Empúries
C68
Roses
Cap de Norfeu
N260
N260
Parc Natural dels Aiguamolls de l'Empordà
Golf de Roses
Besalú
C31
Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa
C66
AP7
NII
Empúries
L'Escala
Punta Grossa
Banyoles
Cornellà de Terri
GI632
Torroella de Montgrí
Cap de la Barra
Illes Medes
C66
C252
C31
AP7
Girona
Begur
Cap de Begur
Anglès
NII
La Bisbal d'Empordà
C66
Fornells
C65
Palafrugell
Cassà de la Selva
Cap de St. Sebastià
Les Gavarres
C25
C31
Cap Roig
Santa Coloma de Farners
Palamós
Llagostera
Platja d'Aro
C65
C35
Vidreres
S'Agaró
Sant Feliu de Guíxols
GI682
Rosamar
AP7
NII
C63
Tossa de Mar
To Barcelona
Lloret de Mar
Blanes
Costa Brava
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

From Barcelona or the French border, drivers connect with the main north-south route (A-7), taking the turnoff to Girona. From Barcelona, take the A-2 north to reach the A-7.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Joan Maragall 2 (www.ajuntament.gi; ✆ **87-297-59-75**), is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 8pm, and Sunday 9am to 2pm.

Exploring the Medieval City

Catedral de Girona ★ CATHEDRAL Girona's major attraction is its magnificent cathedral, reached by climbing a 17th-century baroque staircase of 90 steep steps. (Show-off fitness enthusiasts race up and down the steps in the early



The *Tapestry of the Creation,* **in Girona's cathedral.**

morning.) The 14th-century cathedral represents many architectural styles, including Gothic and Romanesque, but most notably Catalán baroque. The facade you see as you climb those long stairs dates from the 17th and 18th centuries; from a cornice on top rises a bell tower crowned by a dome with a bronze angel weather vane. Go through the cathedral's main door and enter the nave, which at 23m (75 ft.) is the broadest Gothic nave in the world.

The cathedral contains many works of art, displayed for the most part in its museum. Its prize exhibit is the ***Tapestry of the Creation*** ★★, a unique piece of 11th- or 12th-century Romanesque embroidery depicting humans and animals in the Garden of Eden, and showing rare portraits of medieval Catalán Jews. The other major work displayed is one of the world's rarest manuscripts—the 10th-century ***Códex del Beatus,*** which contains an illustrated commentary on the Book of the Apocalypse. From the cathedral's **Chapel of Hope,** a door leads to a **Romanesque cloister** from the 12th and 13th centuries, with an unusual trapezoidal layout. The cloister gallery, with a double colonnade, has a series of biblical scenes, the prize jewel of Catalán Romanesque art. From the cloister you can view the 12th-century **Torre de Carlemany (Charlemagne's Tower).**

Plaça de la Catedral. www.catedraldegirona.org. ☎ **97-221-58-14.** Admission to cathedral free; cloister and museum 5€ adults, 3€ students and children 16 and under. Cathedral daily 9am–1pm and during cloister and museum visiting hours. Cloister and museum Apr–Oct daily 10am–8pm; Nov–Mar daily 10am–7pm.

Els Banys Àrabs HISTORIC SITE An example of Romanesque civic architecture at its best, these baths were actually built in the 12th century after the expulsion of the Moors. In fact, they are built more on a Roman model than an Arabic one. Visit the **caldarium** (hot bath), with its paved floor, and the **frigidarium** (cold bath), with its central octagonal pool surrounded by pillars that support a prismlike structure in the overhead window. The baths were in ruins in the early 20th century and were extensively restored in 1929 without too much attention to historical authenticity.

Carrer Ferran el Católic. www.banysarabs.org. ✆ **97-221-32-62.** Admission 2€ adults, 1€ students. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–2pm. Closed Jan 1, Jan 6, Easter, and Dec 25–26.

The Banys Àrabs.

Església de Sant Feliu CHURCH This 14th- to 17th-century church was built over what was believed to be the tomb of Feliu of Africa, martyred during Diocletian's persecution at the beginning of the 4th century. Important in the architectural history of Catalunya, the church has pillars and arches in the Romanesque style and a Gothic central nave. The **bell tower**—one of the Girona skyline's most characteristic features—has eight pinnacles and one central tower, each supported on a solid octagonal base. The interior contains some exceptional works, including a 16th-century **altarpiece** and a 14th-century alabaster ***Reclining Christ.*** Notice the eight pagan and Christian **sarcophagi** set in the presbytery walls, the two oldest of which are from the 2nd century A.D. One shows Pluto carrying Persephone to the depths of the earth.

Pujada de San Feliu. ✆ **97-220-14-07.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 7am–12:30pm and 4–6:30pm; Sun and holidays 4–6:30pm.

Museu d'Arqueològia MUSEUM Housed in a Romanesque church and cloister from the 11th and 12th centuries, this museum illustrates the history of the country from the Paleolithic to the Visigothic periods, using artifacts discovered in nearby excavations. Much of the statuary on display dates from the Roman period. The monastery itself ranks as one of the best examples of Catalán Romanesque architecture. In the cloister, note some Hebrew inscriptions from gravestones of the old Jewish cemetery.

Plaça Santa Llúcia s/n. www.mac.cat. ✆ **97-220-26-32.** Admission 2.30€ adults, 1.50€ students, free for seniors and children 15 and under. Oct–May Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–6pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm; June–Sept Tues–Sat 10:30am–1:30pm and 4–7pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm.

Museu d'Art ★ ART MUSEUM In a former Romanesque and Gothic Episcopal palace (Palau Episcopal) next to the cathedral, this museum displays artworks spanning 10 centuries (once housed in the old Diocesan Museum and the Provincial Museum). Stop in the throne room to view the **altarpiece of *Sant Pere of Púbol,*** by Bernat Martorell, and the **altarpiece of *Sant Miguel de Crüilles,*** by Luis Borrassa. Both of these works, from the 15th century, are exemplary of Catalán Gothic painting. The museum is also proud of its **altar stone** of *Sant Pere de Roda,* from the 10th and 11th centuries; this work in wood and stone, depicting figures and legends, was once embossed in silver. The

12th-century ***Crüilles Timber*** is a unique piece of Romanesque polychrome wood. ***Our Lady of Besalù,*** from the 15th century, is one of the best Virgins carved in alabaster. While the Gothic art is undeniably some of the most powerful, the museum also has striking holdings in 20th-century Catalán art, especially of the proponents of Noucentisme, a Girona-based movement that proposed a return to Apollonian classicism as the antidote to modernism.

Pujada de la Catedral 12. www.museuart.com. ✆ **97-220-38-34.** Admission 2€ adults; 1.50€ students, children 17 and under, and seniors 65 and over. Mar–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–Feb Tues–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–2pm. Closed Jan 1, Jan 6, and Dec 25–26.

Museu del Cinema MUSEUM Film buffs flock to this museum, the only one of its kind in Spain. It houses the Tomàs Mallol collection of some 25,000 cinema artifacts. Many objects are from the "pre-cinema" era, others from the early days of film, but the collection covers film all the way up to about 1970. The museum even owns the original camera of the pioneering Lumière brothers. Fixed images such as photographs, posters, engravings, drawings, and paintings are exhibited along with some 800 films of various styles and periods. A library holds film-related publications.

Sèquia 1. www.girona.cat/cinema. ✆ **97-241-27-77.** Admission 5€ adults, 2.50€ students, free for children 16 and under. Oct–Apr Tues–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 11am–3pm; May–June and Sept Tues–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 11am–3pm; July–Aug daily 10am–8pm.

Museu dels Jueus ★ MUSEUM This modern museum relates the prominent role of the Jewish Quarter, or Call, from the 12th century until Jews were expelled from all of Spain in 1492. Exhibits in interconnected medieval buildings take great pains to explain a faith and tradition unfamiliar to most Spaniards. The exhibits go beyond basic education to explore Jewish artistic and cultural traditions specific to Catalunya, including exquisitely carved sepulchers.

Força Vella 8. www.ajuntament.gi/call. ✆ **97-221-67-61.** Admission 2€ adults,1.50€ seniors and students. May–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–8pm and Sun 10am–3pm; Nov–Apr Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.

Museu d'História de la Ciutat MUSEUM Housed in the old 18th-century Capuchin Convent de Sant Antoni, this collection dates from the time of Puig d'en Roca (Catalunya's oldest prehistoric site) to the present. It includes Girona's (and Spain's) first electric streetlights. Additional displays of tools, technical materials, and the accouterments of passing lifestyles make up a kind of municipal résumé. Not much remains from the original Capuchin convent—except the room where deceased monks were propped up in niches until their bodies were mummified.

Carrer de la Força 27. www.ajuntament.gi/museuciutat. ✆ **97-222-22-29.** Admission 3€ adults, 2€ students and seniors, free for children 16 and under. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 5–7pm; Sun 10am–2pm.

Where to Eat

Casa Marieta ★ CATALÁN This is the oldest and most historic restaurant in Girona, with walls of photographs that celebrate the town's *modernisme* movement as well as the opening of its first narrow-gauge railway—in this case between Girona and nearby St. Feliu de Guíxols. Set in the heart of town, it specializes in regional Catalán cuisine driven by what is available at local markets. That could be roast duck with pears in the fall, or spit-roasted lamb in the spring, or beef steak with porcini mushrooms in the summer. A noteworthy regional specialty is a casserole-style *trinxat,* made from rice, ham, cabbage, and potatoes. Dessert might include a fallen white-chocolate cake with ice cream made in house. The restaurant contains five different dining areas, most of them permeated with an Art Nouveau theme, some with stained-glass windows and high-backed banquettes.

Plaça Independencia 5–6. www.casamarieta.com. ✆ **97-220-10-16.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–22€. MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm. Closed Feb 8–28.

El Celler de Can Roca ★★★ CATALÁN/INTERNATIONAL About 2km (1¼ miles) from the center of town, this is one of Spain's leading restaurants and one of the reasons that Girona is celebrated as a culinary capital. It was established in 1987 by a trio of brothers (Joán, Jodi, and Josep) whose grandparents first launched the family into the restaurant business in the 1920s. In 2007, the venue moved into dignified newer premises. Cuisine here is about as elegant, upscale, and creative as you're likely to find anywhere in Catalunya, changing according to the seasons and the inspiration of the chef. Oysters with cava or several variations of foie gras might begin your meal, or perhaps you'll start with shrimp soup or a salad of seasonal mushrooms with truffles. Main courses might include codfish braised with spinach, or turbot with goat's milk in a potato shell with mint.

Can Sunyer 48. www.cellercanroca.com. ✆ **97-222-21-57.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–50€; fixed-price menus 95€–145€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 9–11pm. Closed Dec 24–Jan 15 and 1 week in Aug.

Massana ★★★ CATALÁN Pere Massana started 2 decades (and numerous accolades) ago running a simple roasted meat restaurant. Over the years he has transformed the space into a model of artful elegance, and reinvented simple Catalán food as sparely modern dishes with explosive flavors and winning textures. He lacquers lamb ribs with mustard, stuffs pig's trotters with shrimp, and smokes deer fillet before serving it with a reduction of sweet wine and red fruits. His tuna belly is paired with a tart tomato jam. With the chef's astute pairing of flavors, his mastery of contemporary cooking techniques, and his reverence for Catalán tradition, Massana offers the best fine dining in central Girona, and among the best in Catalunya.

Bonastruch de Porta 10. www.restaurantmassana.com. ✆ **97-221-38-20.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 24€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:15–3:45pm; Mon and Wed–Sat 8:45–10:45pm. Closed Dec 24–Jan 15 and 1 week in Aug.

Where to Eat Outside Girona

Sant Pau ★★★ CATALÁN Chef-owner Carme Ruscalleda is one of Spain's leading celebrity chefs and something of a role model for women chefs around the world. This restaurant in the town of Sant Pol de Mar holds three Michelin stars, and for good reason. Established in 1988, it has evolved from a relatively simple delicatessen into one of the culinary landmarks of Spain, replete with the associated fanfare and celebrity-watching. It is located midway between Girona (50km/31 miles) and Barcelona (45km/28 miles) in a villa on the main street of Sant Pol de Mar, near the railway station.

Inside, the setting is restrained, with immaculate contemporary decor and ever-so-polite service. Menu items are noted for the way they pique the intellect as well as the palate. They change frequently, but might include Norwegian lobster with a black-olive froth; boneless scorpion fish with crispy skin, strawberries, and a broth concocted from the fish bones; consommé of squid and duck with the duck's "spicy spleen," kombu seaweed, and the squid's gelatinized ink; and stingray without its cartilage, served with roasted apples, citrus juice, pink pepper oil, and the stingray's own deep-fried cartilage. Ruscalleda is renowned for her exquisite desserts. Diners taking the tasting menu (most do) can add two additional desserts for another 12€.

Carrer Nou 10, in St. Pol de Mar. www.ruscalleda.com. ✆ **93-760-06-62.** Reservations required. Main courses 40€–60€; tasting menu 146€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 1–3:30pm and 9–11pm; Thurs 9–11pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. From Girona, take N-I about 55km (34 miles) south. Closed for 3 weeks in May and 3 weeks in Nov.

Shopping

Girona has a network of shops selling everything from sportswear to formal wear. The most appealing shopping street is **Carrer Santa Clara.** At **Adolfo Domínguez,** Gran Vía Jaume I 15 (✆ **97-220-43-65**), the styles of men's and women's clothing derive from Spanish and other European designs. For men's and women's sportswear, try **Tommy,** Rambla de la Libertat 28 (✆ **97-222-36-93**). Finally, consider **Zara,** Carrer Joan Maragall 25 (✆ **97-222-13-05**), a stylish but affordable emporium for both men and women.

If crafts appeal to you, consider a 32km (20-mile) eastward trek from Girona to the hamlet of **La Bispal,** more or less midway between Girona and the town of Palamos. (From Girona, follow the signs pointing to Palamos.) Here, in rows of simple shops, dozens of artisans display and sell artfully rustic ceramics, some of which are too bulky to ship, while others can be packed in your carry-on luggage.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Central Girona has many tapas bars and cafes, some of which don't have easily distinguishable names. They line **Les Rambles,** ring the edges of the **Plaça de Independencia,** and are scattered inside the antique boundaries of the **Plaça Ferrán el Católic.** Moving at a leisurely pace from one to another is considered something of an art form in the sultry summer heat of Girona's early evenings. Appealing for its crowded conviviality and its impressive roster of shellfish and seafood tapas is **Bar Boira,** Plaça de Independencia 17 (✆ **97-222-29-33**).

Beginning around 11pm, you might want to drop into one or another of the town's discos, the most popular of which is **Local & Bar Platea,** Jeroni Real de Fontclara 4 (www.localplatea.com; ✆ **97-222-72-88**). Set in the city's oldest core (in a narrow alley just behind Girona's main post office), it's open Wednesday to Sunday from 11pm to 5am.

One of the most appealing things to do in Girona after dark, at least between June and September, is to cross the river into the verdant precincts of **Parque de la Devesa,** an artfully landscaped terrain of stately trees, flowering shrubs, kiosk-style refreshment stands, and open-air bars.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Ciutat de Girona ★ 🏷 Bedecked in marble, this modern hotel blends in with Girona's traditional Catalán architecture. But inside, its bedrooms are up-to-date and equipped with the latest technology, ranging from Wi-Fi to satellite

TV. Bedrooms are midsize to spacious and furnished in a Japanese minimalist style. The on-site service restaurant, **Blanc,** is decorated with hundreds of multicolored glass bottles and serves serviceable Mediterranean food. The hotel is located about an 8-minute walk from the cathedral on the opposing bank of the Río Onyer.

Calle Nord 2, 17001 Girona. www.hotel-ciutatdegirona.com. ☎ **97-248-30-38.** Fax 97-248-30-26. 44 units. 75€–164€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 21€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Carlemany In a commercial area only 10 minutes from the historic core, this 1995 hotel caters to large groups and small conferences. It is also a favorite of business travelers. The design is ultramodern and the cavernous interior gleams with marble, polished wood, Oriental carpets, and tropical plants. The midsize to spacious rooms are soundproof and airy.

Plaça Miguel Santaló, 17002 Girona. www.carlemany.es. ☎ **97-221-12-12.** Fax 97-221-49-94. 82 units. 84€–140€ double; 130€–350€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 20€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Historic ★★ 🎁 This hideaway boutique inn, which opens onto views of the Gothic-vaulted cathedral, was formed from a 9th-century house that incorporated parts of a Roman wall and a 3rd-century aqueduct. The hotel offers both standard rooms and private apartments. Rooms are spacious and well furnished, and each one is tastefully decorated. Modern plumbing, with tubs and showers, has been installed throughout the ancient structure. Most units have balconies.

Bellmirall 4A, 17004 Girona. www.hotelhistoric.com. ☎ **97-222-35-83.** Fax 97-220-09-32. 15 units. 115€ double; 150€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking on adjoining plaza. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel Llegendes de Girona ★★ Similar in feel to the Hotel Historic, this modern renovation of a medieval building is wedged into the tiny streets next to Sant Feliu, and just across the pedestrian bridge into the Old City. The hotel celebrates the storied history of the city with reliefs and carvings recounting Girona legends. Rooms are very comfortable, very contemporary in styling, and feature all the high-tech touches from remote controls to Wi-Fi to satellite TV. The hotel makes an ideal location for exploring the Old City and for parking in the large municipal lot just across the river.

Portal de la Barca, 4. www.llegendeshotel.com. ☎ **97-222-09-05.** 15 rooms. 109€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Bellmirall ★ 🏷 This little discovery lies in the heart of the old Call and is one of the best values in the Old Town. The building itself dates from the 14th century; Cristina Vach restored the old building and converted it to a hotel. Guest rooms are small to midsize and are decorated in part with antiques set against brick walls. In summer, it's possible to order breakfast outside in the courtyard. Garage space is provided for bicycles and motorcycles.

Carrer Bellmirall 3, 17004 Girona. www.bellmirall.cat. ☎ **97-220-40-09.** 7 units. 65€–85€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. No credit cards. Free parking (hotel provides permit). Closed Jan–Feb. *In room:* No phone.

Hotel Condal 🏷 Near the rail and bus stations west of the Old Town, this 1960s hotel offers barebones lodging in a clean and safe environment. The lounge and reception area is small, and no meals are served—but these are minor concerns. The small guest rooms are clean and functional, and some open onto pleasant views. The attendants speak little English, but are willing to try.

Joan Maragall 10, 17002 Girona. www.hotelcondalgirona.com. ✆/fax **97-220-44-62.** 28 units. 69€ double; 89€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Gran Ultonia This small hotel lies a short walk from the Plaça de la Independencia. A favorite with business travelers in the 1950s, it's more a tourist hotel today. The compact rooms are furnished in a modern style, with comfortable beds. Double-glazed windows keep out the noise. Some of the rooms opening onto the avenue have tiny balconies. In just about 10 minutes, you can cross the Río Onyar into the medieval quarter. Guests can enjoy a breakfast buffet (not included in the rates quoted below), but no other meals are served.

Av. Jaume I, no. 22, 17001 Girona. http://ca.hotelgranultoniagirona.com. ✆ **97-220-38-50.** Fax 97-220-33-34. 45 units. 52€–95€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 15€. **Amenities:** Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel Peninsular A good bet in the commercial shopping district near the train station, this recently refreshed but traditional hotel is handy for tapas hopping around the Pont de Pedra, and a 10-minute walk to the warren of the Old City. The small rooms are arranged on five floors. Breakfast is the only meal served.

Av. Sant Francesc 6, 17001 Girona. www.novarahotels.com. ✆ **90-273-45-41.** Fax 97-221-04-92. 45 units. 79€–85€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€ nearby. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Meliá Girona This modern and functional chain hotel opened in 1990, and it attracts mostly business travelers. About 20 minutes from the resorts of the Costa Brava, it's often used as an "emergency" hotel in summer when the beach hotels are packed. Its decor lacks a personal touch, but the guest rooms are spacious and comfortable.

Calle Barcelona 112, 17003 Girona. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **97-240-05-00.** Fax 97-224-32-33. 112 units. 77€–95€ double; 92€–130€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Where to Stay Outside Girona

Mas de Torrent ★★★ An hour's drive north of Barcelona and a 15-minute drive from the beaches of the Costa Brava, this member of Relais & Châteaux was elegantly created from a 1751 *masía* (farmstead). Try for one of the 10 rooms in the original farmhouse, with their massive beams and spacious bathrooms with deep tubs and power showers. The rooms in the newer, bungalow-style annex are just as comfortable but lack the mellow old atmosphere. If you can afford it, the suites are the way to go here; each has a private terrace with an individual pool heated with solar panels. From the rooms' stone balconies, visitors can enjoy vistas of the countryside, with Catalunyan vineyards in the distance.

Afueras de Torrent, Torrent 17123 Girona. www.mastorrent.com. ✆ **97-230-32-92.** Fax 97-230-32-93. 39 units. 270€–490€ double; 305€–730€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC,

V. Free parking. 37km (23 miles) north of Girona. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; state-of-the-art health club and spa; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Side Trips from Girona

CASTELL GALA DALÍ DE PÚBOL ★

If you are a devotee of Salvador Dalí and plan on visiting his greatest work of all, the Teatre-Museu in Figueres (p. 547), consider making the pilgrimage to Púbol to gain some insight into the often bizarre aesthetic sensibilities of Spain's most famous surrealist. It is a 21km (13-mile) trek from Girona eastward along Highway C-66, to the village of Púbol, and the rather evocative **Castell Gala Dalí de Púbol,** Carrer Gala Salvador Dalí s/n (www.salvador-dali.org; ✆ **97-248-86-55**). Dating from 1000, the castle was in partial ruins when Dalí bought it as a residence for his estranged wife, Gala, in 1970, on the condition that he'd come over only when she invited him. (She almost never did.) After her death in 1982, Dalí moved in for 2 years, proceeding to other residences in 1984 after his bedroom mysteriously caught fire one night. Quieter, more serious, and much less surrealistically showy than the houses in Portlligat and Figueres, the castle is noteworthy for its severe Gothic and Romanesque dignity, and for furniture and decor that reflect the tastes of the surrealist master. (Don't expect a lot of surrealist art—that's the specialty of the museum at Figueres.) Admission is 8€ adults, 6€ students, and free for children 8 and under. It's open June 15 to September 15 daily from 10am to 8pm; from March 13 to June 14 and September 16 to November 1 it's open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm.

LLORET DE MAR

100km (62 miles) S of the French border, 68km (42 miles) N of Barcelona

Although it has a good half moon–shaped sandy beach, Lloret de Mar is neither chic nor sophisticated, and most people who come here are Europeans on inexpensive package tours. The competition for cheap rooms is fierce.

Lloret de Mar has grown at a phenomenal rate from a small fishing village with just a few hotels to a bustling resort with more hotels than anyone can count. The accommodations are typical of those in other Costa Brava towns, running the gamut from impersonal modern box-type structures to vintage flowerpot-adorned whitewashed buildings on the narrow streets of the Old Town. There are even a few pockets of posh. The area has rich vegetation, attractive scenery, and a mild climate.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Barcelona, take a **train** to Blanes, and then take a **bus** 8km (5 miles) to Lloret. If you drive, head north from Barcelona along the A-19.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Passeig Camprodón i Arrieta 1–2 (www.lloretdemar.org; ✆ **97-236-47-35**), is open June to September Monday to Saturday 9am to 8pm, Sunday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm; and October to May Monday to Saturday 9am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm.

Lloret de Mar's seaside.

Where to Eat In & Around Lloret de Mar

El Trull SEAFOOD This restaurant attracts hordes of Spaniards who appreciate the beautiful scenery of the 3km (1¾-mile) trek north of Lloret into the hills. Set in the modern suburb of Urbanización Playa Canyelles, and popular since it was established in the 1970s, El Trull positions its tables within view of a well-kept garden and a (sometimes-crowded) pool. The food is some of the best in the neighborhood. Among the best menu items are Galician-style octopus with potatoes stewed in olive oil; grilled sea cucumbers; and grilled hake with Jerusalem artichokes and chanterelle mushrooms and truffles. If you like, you can select your fish and shellfish from the displays on ice.

Cala Canyelles s/n. www.eltrull.com. ✆ **97-236-49-28.** Main courses 11€–28€; fixed-price menu 36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8–11pm.

Restaurante Santa Marta ★ INTERNATIONAL/CATALÁN Set in the Hotel Santa Marta about 2km (1¼ miles) west of the commercial center of town, this pleasantly sunny enclave offers well-prepared food and a sweeping view of the beaches and the sea. Menu specialties vary with the season but might include pâté of wild mushrooms in a special sauce, sirloin of veal from Girona flavored with port and served with duck liver, John Dory on a bed of mushrooms, or *cod en papillote* with seasonal vegetables. Chef Francesc Millán has run the kitchen for more than 2 decades, and is ably assisted by old-school sommelier and maitre d' Lluís Tremoleda. In summer, the restaurant serves a buffet lunch by Playa de Santa Cristina.

In the Hotel Santa Marta, Playa de Santa Cristina. ✆ **97-236-49-04.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–35€; *menú degustación* 54€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm. Closed Nov 9–Feb 12.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Nightlife centers on the **Gran Casino Costa Brava,** Av. de la Vikla de Tossa 27–43 (www.gccb.com; ✆ **97-236-11-66**). Designed by architect Férmin Vázquez, it is one of the grandest casinos in Spain, offering such games of chance as French and American roulette, blackjack, and chemin de fer. Admission costs 3€, and hours are Sunday to Thursday 10am to 4am, Friday and Saturday 10am to 5am. The location is in the center of Lloret de Mar.

Where to Stay

Many of the hotels, particularly those a step down from the luxury category, are often booked solid by tour groups. Here are some possibilities for those who reserve in advance.

EXPENSIVE

Hotel Roger de Flor ★ This older hotel, some of which is reminiscent of a private villa, is a pleasant diversion from the aging slabs of concrete filling other sections of the resort. Set at the eastern edge of town, it offers the most pleasing and panoramic views of any hotel. Potted geraniums, climbing bougainvillea, and evenly spaced rows of palms add elegance to the combination of new and old architecture. The midsize rooms are high ceilinged, modern, and excellently furnished. The public rooms contain plenty of exposed wood and spill onto a partially covered terrace.

Turó de l'Estelat s/n, 17310 Lloret de Mar. www.hotelrogerdeflor.com. ☎ **97-236-48-00.** Fax 97-237-16-37. 100 units. 65€–240€ double; 125€–300€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Oct–Feb. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor saltwater pool; room service; 2 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free, in some).

Hotel Santa Marta ★ This tranquil hotel—a short walk above a crescent-shaped bay favored by swimmers—is nestled in a sun-flooded grove of pines. Both public and guest rooms are attractively paneled and traditionally furnished. The spacious guest rooms offer private balconies overlooking either the sea or a pleasant garden. The neighborhood is quiet but desirable, about 2km (1¼ miles) west of the commercial center of town.

Playa de Santa Cristina, 17310 Lloret de Mar. www.hstamarta.com. ☎ **97-236-49-04.** Fax 97-236-92-80. 78 units. 142€–350€ double. 1 week minimum in summer. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov 9–Feb 10. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; spa; 2 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Rigat Park Hotel ★★ This is a pocket of tranquillity and luxury lying 2km (1¼ miles) from the center of Lloret de Mar on the magnificent Playa de Fanals, one of the best beaches along the Costa Brava. This cozy enclave of Mediterranean plushness is surrounded by a garden of pine and eucalyptus. It looks like a private home of charm and grace. The most desirable of the rooms, all well furnished, are those opening onto the seafront, of course. In the evening, the hotel restaurant is a romantic place to dine by candlelight on an open terrace cooled by sea breezes.

Playa de Fanals, 17310 Lloret de Mar. www.rigat.com. ☎ **97-236-52-00.** Fax 97-237-04-11. 78 units. 210€–385€ double; 345€–2,160€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Dec–Feb. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor, 1 outdoor); room service; sauna; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

MODERATE

Guitart Monterrey ★★ ☺ This hotel opened in 1940 when the world was at war. It closed for a year of renovations in 2007, but since reopening in 2008, it has become a prime spot for travelers seeking a country-club atmosphere in a large park near a town center and beaches. The interior areas have large windows and panoramic views. Guest rooms are spacious and luxuriously decorated, many large enough to contain a lounge area. A lot of the units also open onto private balconies. The restaurants and bars are among the best of any hotel in town, and kids are especially welcomed, with much entertainment provided for them.

Carretera de Tossa, 17310 Lloret de Mar. www.ghmonterrey.com. ✆ **97-234-60-54.** Fax 97-236-35-12. 200 units. 82€–282€ double; 270€–660€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Closed Oct–Dec. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 4 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's center; health club and spa; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; 3 outdoor tennis courts; extensive watersports equipment/rental. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player (in some), hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Excelsior This hotel attracts a beach-oriented clientele from Spain and northern Europe. The Excelsior sits almost directly on the beach, rising six floors above the esplanade. All but a handful of the rooms offer either frontal or lateral views of the sea. The furniture is modern but uninspiring.

Passeig Mossèn Jacinto Verdaguer 16, 17310 Lloret de Mar. ✆ **97-236-41-37.** Fax 97-237-16-54. 45 units. 60€–140€ double. MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; exercise room; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

TOSSA DE MAR ★

90km (56 miles) N of Barcelona, 12km (7½ miles) NE of Lloret de Mar

The gleaming white town of Tossa de Mar, with its 12th-century walls, labyrinthine Old Quarter, fishing boats, and fairly good sand beaches, is perhaps the most attractive base for a Costa Brava vacation. It seems to have more *joie de vivre* than its competitors. Moreover, the towering cliffs that surround the cove of Tossa kept the town from overconstruction.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Tossa survived as a port center, growing rich on the cork industry. But when the cork business declined in the 20th century, many of its citizens immigrated to America. In the 1950s, thanks in part to the Ava Gardner movie *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman,* tourists began to discover the charms of Tossa, and a new industry was born.

To experience these charms, walk through the 12th-century walled town, known as **Vila Vella,** built on the site of a Roman villa from the 1st century A.D. Enter through the Torre de les Hores. Tossa was once a secret haunt for artists and writers—Marc Chagall called it a "blue paradise." Descending from the Old Town, follow signs to Plaça del Pintor J. Villalonga, where you'll find steps that let you walk along the medieval ramparts. In 1914, archaeologists uncovered the ruins of one of the grandest Roman villas on the Costa Brava, **Els Ametllers Roman Villa.** Inhabited from the 1st century B.C. to the 6th century A.D., it was the headquarters of a vast tract of vineyards producing wine for export to Rome. During the summer, beautiful mosaic floors of the rooms are uncovered for viewing.

Tossa itself has two main beaches, **Mar Gran** and **La Bauma.** The coast near Tossa, north and south, offers even more possibilities. Because Tossa is one of the few resorts that has withstood exploitation and retained most of its allure, it enjoys a broad base of international visitors—so many that in summer it's next to impossible to find a room unless you make reservations far in advance.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Direct **bus** service is offered from Blanes and Lloret de Mar. Tossa de Mar is also on the main Barcelona-Palafruggel route. Service from Barcelona is daily from 8am to 8:30pm and takes 1½ hours. For information, call ✆ **90-230-20-25.**

To drive, head north from Barcelona along the A-19.

Tossa de Mar's beaches butt up to the Vila Vella.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Av. El Pelegrí 25 (www.infotossa.com; ✆ **97-234-01-08**). April, May, and October, it's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm; November to March, Monday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm; and June to September, Monday to Saturday 9am to 9pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm.

Where to Eat

Bahía CATALÁN/SEAFOOD Just across the street from the beach, Bahía has been feeding hungry sun-worshippers since 1953. Menu favorites are, for the most part, based on time-honored Catalán traditions and include *simitomba* (a grilled platter of fish); *brandade* (emulsion of cod and olive oil); baked monkfish; and an array of grilled fish—including *salmonete* (red mullet), *dorada* (gilthead sea bream), and *calamares* (squid).

Passeig del Mar 29. ✆ **97-234-03-22.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–32€; daily menu 16€; *menú degustación* 33€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

La Cuina de Can Simón ★★ CATALÁN Nine of the most sought-after dining tables in Tossa de Mar are within this charming, cozy, and intimate establishment. During the colder months, a fire might be burning in the stately looking fireplace. The antique, elegantly rustic, stone-sided dining room was originally built in 1741. Its small size allows the hardworking staff to prepare some extremely esoteric courses. Most diners select the gastronomic menu, consisting of six refined small courses. Expect a seductive, modern repertoire that displays unerring technique and imaginative flavors. Courses, adjusted seasonally, include a minicassoulet of shellfish; oven-roasted duckling with sweet-and-sour sauce; crayfish-stuffed ravioli with caviar and truffle oil; or monkfish suprême with scalloped potatoes and golden-fried sweet onions. The artfully arranged platter of ice cream, pastries, sauces, tarts, and seasonal red fruits is a perfect ending.

Portal 24. ✆ **97-234-12-69.** Reservations required. Main courses 21€–34€; fixed-price menu 60€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Sun 1–3pm and 8–10:30pm. Closed Jan 15–Feb 15 and 2 weeks in Nov.

Restaurant Sa Muralla CATALÁN This casual spot sandwiched halfway between the Vila Vella and the beach community has a good wood-fired grill and prepares very simple meals. But few places in town do quite such a good job with *cim-i-tomba,* the traditional Tossa dish of fish and potato layered with aioli. This is one restaurant where people who don't like fish have several alternatives: pork, lamb, veal, and chicken, all of them grilled.

Portal 16. ✆ **97-234-11-28.** Main dishes 13€–26€. MC, V. Mid-Mar to Sept daily 1–3pm and 8–10:30pm; Oct to mid-Mar daily 1–3pm.

Where to Stay

VERY EXPENSIVE

Gran Hotel Reymar ★ This hotel is a triumph of engineering. Constructed in the 1960s, it sits atop a jagged rock high above Mar Menuda beach, about a 10-minute walk southeast of Tossa's historic walls. Renovated every few years, the Reymar has several levels of expansive terraces ideal for sunbathing away from the crowds below. Each good-size guest room has a mix of modern wood-grained and painted furniture, a balcony, and a sea view.

Playa Mar Menuda s/n, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.tossagranhotelreymar.com. ✆ **97-234-03-12.** Fax 97-234-15-04. 166 units. 123€–266€ double; 240€–376€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Closed Nov–Apr 17. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 3 bars; babysitting; bikes; children's center; concierge; exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (3€ per hr.).

MODERATE

Best Western Mar Menuda ★★ 🎁 This hotel is a real Costa Brava hideaway surviving amid tawdry tourist traps and fast-food joints. Its terrace is the area's most panoramic, overlooking the sea and the architectural highlights of the town. Guest rooms range from midsize to spacious, each tastefully furnished and containing a good-size bathroom. The staff is helpful in arranging many watersports, such as scuba diving, windsurfing, and sailing. The cuisine served here is first-class.

Playa Mar Menuda s/n, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.bestwesternhotelmarmenuda.com. ✆ **800/528-1234** in the U.S., or 97-234-10-00. Fax 97-234-00-87. 50 units. 58€–186€ double; 85€–210€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Dec. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's playground; outdoor freshwater pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Diana ★ Set back from the esplanade, this was designed as a *modernisme*-style villa by students of Gaudí. It boasts the most elegant fireplace on the Costa Brava. An inner patio—with towering palms, vines, flowers, and fountains—is almost as popular with guests as the sandy front-yard beach. The spacious rooms contain fine traditional furnishings and modern bathrooms; many open onto private balconies.

Plaça de Espanya 6, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.diana-hotel.com. ✆ **97-234-18-86.** Fax 97-234-11-03. 21 units. 65€–190€ double; 108€–200€ triple. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking nearby 9€. Closed Nov–Mar 15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Canaima ☺ Lacking the charm of Hotel Diana (see above), this little inn is the bargain of Tossa de Mar. It lies in a tranquil zone in a residential area 150m (about 500 ft.) from the beach. The palm trees in this sector of Tossa evoke a real Mediterranean setting. Built in 1963, the hotel bounced back with a series of postmillennium restorations. Most of the midsize guest rooms, each with a tiled bathroom, have a balcony opening onto a view. Because some of the units have three beds, the Canaima is also a family favorite.

Av. La Palma 24, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.hotelcanaima.com. ✆ **97-234-09-95.** Fax 97-234-09-95. 17 units. 55€–75€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. Parking 6€. Closed Oct–Mar. **Amenities:** Terrace bar. *In room:* No phone.

Hotel Cap d'Or ★ 🎁 Perched on the waterfront on a quiet edge of town, this 1790s building nestles against the stone walls and towers of the village castle. Built of rugged stone itself, the Cap d'Or is a combination of old country inn and seaside hotel. The guest rooms come in different shapes and sizes but are decently maintained, each with a good bed and a small bathroom. Although the hotel is a bed-and-breakfast, it does have a terrace on the promenade offering a quick meal.

Passeig de Vila Vella 1, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.hotelcapdor.com. ✆/fax **97-234-00-81.** 11 units. 80€–98€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Parking nearby 23€. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Neptuno The popular Neptuno sits on a quiet residential hillside northwest of Vila Vella, somewhat removed from the seaside promenade and the bustle of Tossa de Mar's inner core. Built in the 1960s, the hotel was enlarged in the late 1980s. Inside, antiques are mixed with modern furniture. The beamed-ceiling dining room is rustic. The guest rooms are tastefully lighthearted and modern, each with a good bed and a small bathroom. This place is a longtime favorite with northern Europeans, who often book it solid during July and August.

La Guardia 52, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.ghthotels.com. ✆ **97-234-01-43.** Fax 97-234-19-33. 124 units. 70€–146€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Closed mid-Oct to Apr. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Tonet Opened in the early 1960s, in the earliest days of the region's tourist boom, this family-run pension is one of the Tossa's oldest. Renovated since then, it's on a central plaza surrounded by narrow streets and maintains the ambience of a country inn, with upper-floor terraces where you can relax amid potted vines and other plants. The small guest rooms are rustic, with wooden headboards and simple furniture. The Tonet maintains its own brand of Catalán charm.

Plaça de l'Església 1, 17320 Tossa de Mar. www.hoteltonet.com. ✆ **97-234-02-37.** Fax 97-234-30-96. 36 units. 65€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 10€. **Amenities:** Bar; Internet (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV, no phone.

Where to Stay Outside Tossa del Mar

Hostal de la Gavina ★★★ This is the grandest address in the northeast corridor of Spain. Since it opened in the early 1980s, the Hostal de la Gavina has attracted A-list celebrities as well as discerning travelers who desire an elegant stay on the often-overrun Costa Brava. The hotel is on a peninsula jutting seaward from the center of S'Agaro, within a thick-walled Iberian villa built as the home of the Ansesa family (the hotel's owners) in 1932. Most of the guest rooms are in the resort's main building, which has been enlarged and modified. The spacious units are the most sumptuous in the area, with elegant appointments and deluxe fabrics.

Plaça de la Rosaleda, 17248 S'Agaro (Girona). www.lagavina.com. ✆ **97-232-11-00.** Fax 97-232-15-73. 74 units. 245€–380€ double; from 490€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking outside; garage 20€. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bikes; health club; 2 pools (1 heated indoor, 1 saltwater outdoor); room service; spa; 2 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Side Trips from Tossa del Mar

SANT FELIU DE GUÍXOLS ★

Just 22km (14 miles) north of Tossa on the scenic coastal highlands road, Sant Feliu de Guíxols is a beautiful harbor and fishing port framed on one side by a rocky headland holding the luxury residential area of S'Agaro and on the other by a 10th-century Benedictine monastery and church. Although the monastery is closed for restoration, **Mare de Déu dels Angels** remains an active parish church filled with a millennium of religious art, some of it quite powerful. It's located on the Plaça del Monestir and is open daily 9am to 12:30pm and 7 to 8:30pm at no charge.

Also a part of the monastery complex, the **Museu d'História** (✆ **97-282-15-75**) explains the local cork industry that made Sant Feliu wealthy in the late 19th century—just in time for cork barons to build the marvelous *modernisme* houses along Platja Sant Pol. The museum is on the Plaça del Monestir and admission is free. It is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 5 to 8pm, and Sunday 10am to 1pm.

The Platja Sant Pol is one of the least crowded beaches on the Costa Brava and is well furnished with adjacent bars and restaurants for cold drinks and inexpensive meals. The hills around Sant Feliu are crisscrossed with hiking paths. Ask for a map at the **Oficina Municipal de Turisme Sant Feliu de Guíxols** (www.guixols.cat; ✆ **97-282-00-51**) at Passeig del Mar 8–12. It is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

EMPÚRIES

Greek commerce and Roman might are both writ large in the ruins of **Empúries ★**, located on one of the Costa Brava's northernmost beaches near the village of L'Escala. The archaeological site has been under excavation since 1908. Greeks founded the city in 600 B.C. as a trade port, then built a second city slightly inland in 550 B.C., naming it Emporion, or "trading place." The first settlement lies buried under a fishing village, but the extensive city of Emporion and its cemetery make up the greater part of the ruins. Farther inland, Scipio Africanus founded a military camp in 219 B.C. to stage his first invasion to oust the Carthaginians from the Iberian Peninsula. An amphitheater and villas with mosaics still attest to the flourishing Roman presence. At the site, the **Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya** interprets the three towns and chronicles the archaeological excavations. The famous sculpture of Asclepios (god of medicine) was returned to the site from Barcelona in 2008. The museum is on Carrer Puig i Cadafalch s/n (www.mac.cat; ✆ **97-277-02-08**). Admission is 3€

adults, free under 16 and over 60. It is open June to September daily 10am to 8pm, and October to May daily 10am to 6pm.

You can also walk along the seaside path from the ruins to the flourishing village of L'Escala. Salted anchovies from the town are famous all over Spain, and exhibits at the **Museu de l'Anxova i de la Sal** explain the local fishing industry from the 16th century to present. The little museum is at Av. Francesc Macià 1 (www.anxova-sal.cat; ✆ **97-277-68-15**). Admission is 2€. It is open mid-June to September Tuesday to Friday 10am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8pm, Saturday 11am to 1pm and 6 to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 1pm; from October to mid-June it's closed in the afternoons.

FIGUERES

219km (136 miles) N of Barcelona, 37km (23 miles) E of Girona

In the heart of Catalunya, Figueres figured in Spanish history when Felipe V wed María Luisa of Savoy here in 1701 in the church of San Pedro, thereby paving the way for the War of the Spanish Succession. The town itself is a handsome oasis surrounded by near-desert. A prosperous gateway for trade between France and Spain, Figueres has three outstanding *modernisme* houses in its central shopping district, located at 20, 24, and 27 La Rambla. But there are two main reasons for visiting Figueres: some of the best restaurants in northern Catalunya, and the appropriately bizarre museum created by and devoted to Salvador Dalí.

Essentials

GETTING THERE RENFE (www.renfe.com; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) has hourly **train** service between Barcelona and Figueres. All trains between Barcelona and France stop here. It's better and faster to take the train if you're coming from Barcelona. But if you're in Cadaqués (p. 550), four daily SARFA **buses** (www.sarfa.com; ✆ **90-230-20-25**) make the 45-minute trip.

Figueres is a 45-minute drive from Girona on the excellent north-south toll highway, the AP-7. You can also drive on the same road south from the French border at La Jonquera or north from Barcelona, exiting at the major turnoffs to Figueres.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at the Plaça del Sol (www.figueresciutat.com; ✆ **97-250-31-55**). From July to September, the office is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 8pm and Sunday 10am to 3pm; from November to Easter, hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm; and from Easter to June and October, hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm and 4 to 7pm, and Saturday 10am to 2pm and 3:30 to 6:30pm.

Exploring Figueres

Teatre-Museu Dalí ★★★ ART MUSEUM Salvador Dalí was as famous for his flamboyance and exhibitionism as he was for his surrealist and often erotic imagery. Seeking to capitalize on the artist's fame, the mayor of Figueres invited him in 1961 to create a museum. Dalí chose the ruins of the old municipal theater as his location, as the space had held his first art show. Asked why this building, he replied, "Because I am a theatrical painter." In fact, he considered the entire project as a surreal object—as his last and greatest work. The Teatre-Museu finally opened in 1974. On his death in 1989, thousands of artifacts and artworks from throughout his life passed to the Gala-Salvador Dalí Fundació, which maintains the museum. Dalí spent his last 4 years living here in the Torre Galatea (named for his wife, Gala), and he was buried beneath the great dome depicting the eye of a fly as seen through a microscope. Also painted on the ceiling are portraits of himself and Gala as seen from below the ground. (You're looking at them feet first.) Don't miss the artist's first Cadillac in the courtyard, where it rains *inside* the car. Plaça de Gala-Dalí 5. www.salvador-dali.org. ✆ **97-267-75-00.** Admission 12€ adults, 9€ students and seniors 65 and over, free for children 9 and under. Mar–June and Oct daily 9:30am–6pm; Nov–Feb daily 10:30am–6pm; July–Sept daily 9am–8pm.

The whimsical roof of the Teatre-Museu Dalí.

THE MAD, MAD WORLD OF salvador dalí

Salvador Dalí (1904–89) became one of the leading exponents of a certain stream of surrealism, depicting irrational imagery of dreams and delirium in a unique, meticulously detailed style. Famous for his eccentricity, he was called "outrageous, talented, relentlessly self-promoting, and unfailingly quotable." Until his death at age 84, he was the last survivor of the three famous *enfants terribles* of Spain. (The poet Federico García Lorca and the filmmaker Luis Buñuel were the other two.)

For all his international renown, Dalí was born in Figueres and died in Figueres. Most of his works are in the eponymous Teatre-Museu there, built by the artist himself around the former theater where his first exhibition was held. Dalí was also buried in the Teatre-Museu, next door to the church that witnessed both his christening and his funeral—the first and last acts of a perfectly planned scenario.

Salvador Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech, the son of a highly respected notary, was born on May 11, 1904, in a house on Carrer Monturiol in Figueres. In 1922, he registered at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid and went to live at the prestigious Residencia de Estudiantes. There his friendship with García Lorca and Buñuel had a more enduring effect on his artistic future than his studies at the school. As a result of his undisciplined behavior and the attitude of his father, who clashed with the Primo de Rivera dictatorship over a matter related to elections, the young Dalí spent a month in prison.

In the summer of 1929, the artist René Magritte, along with the poet Paul Eluard and his wife, Gala, came to stay at Cadaqués, and their visit caused sweeping changes in Dalí's life. The young painter became enamored of Eluard's wife; Dalí left his family and fled with Gala to Paris, where he became an enthusiastic member of the surrealist movement. Some of his most famous paintings—*The Great Masturbator,*

Where to Stay & Eat

Durán Hotel & Restaurant ★ CATALÁN This popular place for a top-notch meal in the provinces once claimed Dalí as a loyal patron. You might start with the Catalán salad made with radishes, boiled egg, ham pâté, tuna fish, tomato, and fresh salad greens. Other specialties are steak with Roquefort, *zarzuela* (fish stew), and *filetes de lenguado a la naranja* (sole in orange sauce). Like the Empordá (see below), the Durán specializes in game. If it's available, try the grilled rabbit on a plank, served with white wine. The french fries here are crisp and excellent. Finish off with a rich dessert or at least an espresso. You can also stay at the Durán, in one of its 65 well-furnished rooms, each with bathroom, air-conditioning, and TV. A double goes for 75€ to 100€.

Carrer Lasauca 5, 17600 Figueres. www.hotelduran.com. ✆ **97-250-12-50.** Fax 97-267-70-46. Reservations required. Main courses 14€–29€; fixed-price lunch menu 20€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4pm and 8:30–11pm.

Hotel Empordá ★★ CATALÁN You might have your finest meal in the area at this restaurant. Don't judge the place by its ordinary appearance; there's nothing ordinary about the cuisine, as all the food-loving French who cross the border

Lugubrious Game, and *Portrait of Paul Eluard*—date from his life at Portlligat, the small Costa Brava village where he lived and worked off and on during the 1930s.

Following Dalí's break with the tenets of the surrealist movement, his work underwent a radical change, with a return to classicism and what he called his mystical and nuclear phase. He became one of the most fashionable painters in the United States and seemed so intent on self-promotion that the surrealist poet André Breton baptized him with the anagram "Avida Dollars." Dalí wrote a partly fictitious autobiography titled *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* and *Hidden Faces*, a novel containing autobiographical elements. These two short literary digressions earned him still greater prestige and wealth, as did his collaborations in the world of cinema (such as the dream set for Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, 1945) and in those of theater, opera, and ballet.

On August 8, 1958, Dalí and Gala were married according to the rites of the Catholic Church in a ceremony performed in the strictest secrecy at the shrine of Els Angels, just a few miles from Girona.

During the 1960s, Dalí painted some very large works, such as *The Battle of Tetuán* and *Perpignan Railway Station*, a veritable revelation of his paranoid-critical method that relates to his obsession with painter Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus.*

In 1979, Dalí's health began to decline, and he retired to Portlligat in a state of depression. When Gala died, he moved to Púbol, where, obsessed by the theory of catastrophes, he painted his last works until he suffered severe burns in a fire that nearly cost him his life. Upon recovery, he moved to the Torre Galatea, a building he had bought as an extension to the museum in Figueres. Here he lived for 5 more years, hardly ever leaving his room, until his death in 1989.

to dine here can attest. The family-run restaurant, .8km (½ mile) north of the town center, gained an early reputation among U.S. military personnel in the area for subtly prepared game and fish dishes. Fans included Salvador Dalí (who wrote his own cookbook). The appetizers are the finest along the Costa Brava, including duck foie gras with Armagnac, warm pâté of *rape* (monkfish) with garlic mousseline, and fish soup with fennel. The outstanding fish and seafood dishes include cuttlefish in Catalán sauce, suprême of sea bass with flan made with fennel and anchovy, and brochette of grilled baby squids in vinaigrette. Among the meat selections are the chef's special *lieure à la royale* (hare), beef filet in red-wine sauce with onion marmalade, and goose in a delectable mushroom sauce. You can also stay in one of the 42 midsize rooms here, each with air-conditioning and TV. Doubles run 70€ to 109€, while suites are 124€ to 160€.

Av. Salvador Dalí 170. www.hotelemporda.com. ✆ **97-250-05-62.** Reservations required. Main courses 11€–42€; fixed-price menu 45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:45–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm.

Hotel Pirineos This pleasant hotel near the main road leading to the center of town is a 5-minute walk from the Dalí museum. Many of the comfortable but small rooms have balconies. Furnishings are rather plain, although the beds are good and the bathrooms are neat. The hotel was last renovated in 2005 and has been well maintained ever since.

Av. Salvador Dalí 68, 17600 Figueres. www.hotelpirineospelegri.com. ✆ **97-250-03-12.** Fax 97-250-07-66. 56 units. 78€–105€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel President Since 1970, this has been one of the most desirable hotels in town because of its location in the town's center, a 5-minute walk from the Dalí museum. An austere exterior belies the welcoming comfort inside. The midsize guest rooms are neutrally decorated, with comfortable beds and tiled bathrooms.

Av. Salvador Dalí 82, 17600 Figueres. www.hotelpresident.info. ✆ **97-250-17-00.** Fax 97-250-19-97. 80 units. 59€–73€ double. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Ronda A 10-minute walk from the Dalí museum, this hotel has been welcoming travelers since the 1970s. You are housed in comfort (at a very low price) in a typically Catalán building with an unpretentious facade; the building has conventional Mediterranean-style white walls, ample balconies, and simple decorations. The small guest rooms are clean and simple, each with a plain bathroom. The hotel is popular with budget-minded Europeans, so reservations in summer are highly recommended.

Ronda Barcelona 104, 17600 Figueres. www.hotelronda.com. ✆ **97-250-39-11.** Fax 97-250-16-82. 52 units. 65€–105€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

CADAQUÉS ★★

196km (122 miles) N of Barcelona, 31km (19 miles) E of Figueres

Cadaqués is still unspoiled and remote, despite the publicity it received when Salvador Dalí lived in the adjacent village of Portlligat (in a split-level house surmounted by a giant egg). The last resort on the Costa Brava before the French border, Cadaqués is reached by a small road clinging to the cliffsides of mountains coming from Roses, the nearest major center. When you get to Cadaqués,

Cadaqués's waterfront.

you really feel off the beaten path. The village wraps around half a dozen small coves, with a narrow street running along the water's edge. This street has no railing, so exercise caution. Scenically, Cadaqués is a knockout: crystal-blue water, fishing boats on the sandy beaches, old whitewashed houses, narrow twisting streets, and a 16th-century parish church up on a hill.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Three to four **buses** per day run from Figueres to Cadaqués. Trip time is 1¼ hours. The service is operated by **SARFA** (www.sarfa.com; ✆ **90-230-20-25**). Driving from Barcelona, follow the A-7 northeast until you come to the town of Figueres, where you'll see signs leading east to Cadaqués.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Cotxe 2 (www.visitcadaques.org; ✆ **97-225-83-15**), is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 2pm and 3 to 8pm, and Sunday 10:30am to 1pm.

Exploring Cadaqués

The landmark of Cadaqués is the **Església de Santa María,** Calle Eliseu Meifren, a 16th-century Gothic church with a baroque altar. It is one of the most easterly churches in Spain. It stands in the old section of town, dominating the narrow hilly streets. Hours are not written in stone. Usually it can be visited daily from 9am to 5pm, but don't count on that.

From the town center, it is only a half-hour walk to **Casa-Museo Salvador Dalí,** in Portlligat (www.salvador-dali.org; ✆ **97-225-10-15**), 3km (1¾ miles) from the town center along the beach. This was Dalí's summer house where he lived with Gala, his muse and spouse. Famous friends were frequent visitors, including poet Federico García Lorca and the filmmaker Luis Buñuel. This museum forms part of the "Dalí triangle," which includes the Teatre-Museu Dalí at Figueres (p. 547) and the castle at Púbol (p. 539).

Only two Dalí works remain in the house: a lip-shaped sofa and a pop-art miniature of Granada's Alhambra. Overlooking the beach, the fisherman's house has amusing little white-chimney pots and two egg-shaped towers. Hours are September to January and February to mid-June daily 10:30am to 6pm, and from mid-June to mid-September daily 9:30am to 9pm. It's closed from January 7 to February 11. Admission is 10€ for adults, and 8€ for children, students, and seniors. Reservations are mandatory to visit the museum.

Where to Eat

The summer town of Cadaqués sees restaurants come and go, some hardly surviving for one season. Many guests in summer wander the back streets looking for a little eatery. There are several along **Calle Miguel Rosset** off Plaça Frederic Rahola. Cadaqués doesn't have a world-class restaurant as of yet. Many visitors prefer the Mediterranean cuisine at the Hotel Rocamar (see below). Restaurants along the seafront tend to be more about the view than the food.

Where to Stay

Hostal S'Aguarda 🏷 On the road winding above Cadaqués on the way to Portlligat, this *hostal* has a panoramic view of the village's harbor and medieval church. Each of the modern, airy rooms opens onto a flower-decked terrace. They have tiled floors and simple furniture, along with well-equipped bathrooms.

Carretera de Portlligat 30, 17488 Cadaqués. www.hotelsaguarda.com. ☎ **97-225-80-82.** Fax 97-225-10-57. 28 units. 53€–125€ double; 70€–150€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Playa Sol ★ In a relatively quiet section of the port along the bay, this 1950s hotel offers the best view of the stone church at the distant edge of the harbor. The balconied building is constructed of brick and terra-cotta tiles. The small rooms are comfortably furnished. The hotel doesn't have an official restaurant, but it does offer lunch from June 15 to September 15.

Platja Planch 3, 17488 Cadaqués. www.playasol.com. ☎ **97-225-81-00.** Fax 97-225-80-54. 50 units. 86€–204€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€–14€. Closed Oct 17–Mar 3. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes; Jacuzzi; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Rocamar ☺ This beachside hotel is one of the better choices in town, attracting a fun-loving crowd of young northern Europeans in summer. All the guest rooms are well furnished, with rustic yet comfortable pieces; the small bathrooms are adequate. The rooms in front have balconies opening onto the sea, while those in back have balconies with views of the mountains and beyond. The hotel is known for its good food served at affordable prices.

Dr. Bartomeus, 17488 Cadaqués. www.rocamar.com. ☎/fax **97-225-81-50.** 70 units. 80€–206€ double; 142€–310€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's playground; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor, 1 outdoor); room service; sauna; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Llane Petit 🏷 This little inn of considerable charm is located below the better-known Hotel Rocamar and opens right onto the beach. A hospitable place, it offers decent-size guest rooms and well-maintained bathrooms. All units open onto small terraces. The owners keep the hotel under constant renovation during the slow months so that it is always fresh when the summer hordes descend. The hotel's small dinner-only restaurant is recommended, as the cuisine is well prepared and reasonably priced.

Dr. Bartomeus 37, 17488 Cadaqués. www.llanepetit.com. ☎ **97-225-10-20.** Fax 97-225-87-78. 37 units. 74€–173€ double. DC, MC, V. Parking 10€–15€. Closed Dec 9–26 and Jan–Feb 11. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

ARAGÓN

14

Landlocked Aragón, along with Navarra, forms the northeastern quadrant of Spain. Most of this ancient land is *terra incognita* for the average tourist, which is unfortunate since Aragón is one of the most history-rich regions of the country. You can visit it as an extension of your trip to Castilla y León to the west, or as a segment of your trek through Catalunya to the east. It is composed of three provinces: Zaragoza, remote Teruel to the south, and Huesca in the north toward the Pyrenees. These are also the names of the provinces' three major cities.

Aragón is known best for two former residents: Catalina de Aragón (better known in English as Catherine of Aragón), the unfortunate first wife of Henry VIII of England; and her father, Fernando of Aragón, whose marriage to Isabel, queen of Castilla y León, in the 15th century, led to the unification of Spain.

Aragón also prides itself on its exceptional Mudéjar architecture and on its bullfighting tradition. In September many villages in the region have their own festivals, when bulls run through the streets. What they don't have is the good promotion that Hemingway gave the festival at Pamplona (p. 569) in the neighboring region of Navarra. On the other hand, they aren't plagued with wine-drunk tourists—the curse of the Pamplona festival. Aragón is also known for the *jota,* a bounding, leaping folkloric dance performed by men and women since at least the 1700s.

Aragón's capital, Zaragoza, is the most visited destination in the region because it lies on the main auto and train route between Madrid and Barcelona. If you're driving from Madrid to Barcelona (or vice versa), make a detour to Zaragoza. If Aragón interests you while there, stick around to explore this ancient land.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN ARAGÓN

- **Wandering among Mudéjar masterpieces:** Few small cities in Spain so thoroughly display the artistic synergy between Muslim architects and Christian patrons as Teruel, with its 14th-century Mudéjar gate and its Mudéjar cathedral and churches.
- **Seeing the tiny statue that looms so large in Spanish faith:** The statue of El Pilar in Zaragoza may only measure 39cm (15 in.) tall, but it attracts the faithful from all over Spain because it represents the first manifestation of Mary to the Spanish people.
- **Enjoying Aragón lamb with local wines:** Suckling lamb from Aragón was the first food product in Spain to win protected status—and for good reason. The meat is rich and melting, and perfectly matched by Aragón's bright red wines from Cariñena.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The gardens of the Monasterio de Piedra.**

- **Appreciating the intersection of history and myth:** Friezes on Tarazona's town hall point to the region's history by depicting Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V. But they also point to the region's myths, showing the deeds that Hercules was said to have performed on a nearby mountain.
- **Communing with nature at the Monasterio de Piedra:** The park surrounding this 1195 Cistercian monastery is a woodland wonderland with lakes, grottoes, and even thunderous waterfalls. No wonder the monks saw it as a "foretaste of Paradise."

ZARAGOZA ★★

322km (200 miles) NE of Madrid, 306km (190 miles) W of Barcelona

Zaragoza lies halfway between Madrid and Barcelona. This provincial capital, the seat of the ancient kingdom of Aragón, is a bustling, prosperous, commercial city of wide boulevards and arcades.

Zaragoza has two cathedrals—one a Mudéjar landmark, the other a major shrine. Like Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Zaragoza is a major pilgrimage center. According to legend, the Virgin Mary appeared to Santiago (St. James the Apostle), patron saint of Spain, on the banks of the Río Ebro and ordered him to build a church there.

Zaragoza is at the center of a rich *huerta,* or plain. Founded by Carthaginians, it flourished as the Roman colony of Caesaraugusta, then played a pivotal role in Christian-Muslim political relations as an independent Muslim principality in the 11th century. (Zaragoza lined up against the Almoravid armies of Sevilla.) Today, Zaragoza is a city of more than 750,000 people, slightly less than three-quarters of the entire population of Aragón.

The 40,000 students at the Universidad de Zaragoza have livened up this once-staid city. Cafes, theaters, restaurants, music bars, and *tascas* have boomed in recent years, and more monuments have been restored and opened to the public.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) has direct **flights** to Zaragoza from Madrid and Barcelona. From the airport in Zaragoza, you can get a bus to the Plaza de San Francisco.

A total of 29 **trains** arrive daily from Barcelona (trip time: 1½–5¼ hr.) and 21 from Madrid (1¼–3½ hr.). Trains pull into Estación Zaragoza-Delicias, Calle Rioja 33 (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). All but a few trains per day are high-speed rail.

There is one direct **bus** a day between Zaragoza and Barcelona (3½ hr.). By car, Zaragoza is easily reached on the E-90 (A-2) east from Madrid or west from Barcelona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** Plaza del Pilar s/n (www.turismozaragoza.com; ✆ **90-214-20-08**), is open daily June to October 9am to 9pm, and November to May 10am to 8pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS One of the city's big festivities is the **Fiesta de la Virgen del Pilar,** held the week of October 12, with top-name bullfighters, religious processions, and general merriment.

Exploring Zaragoza

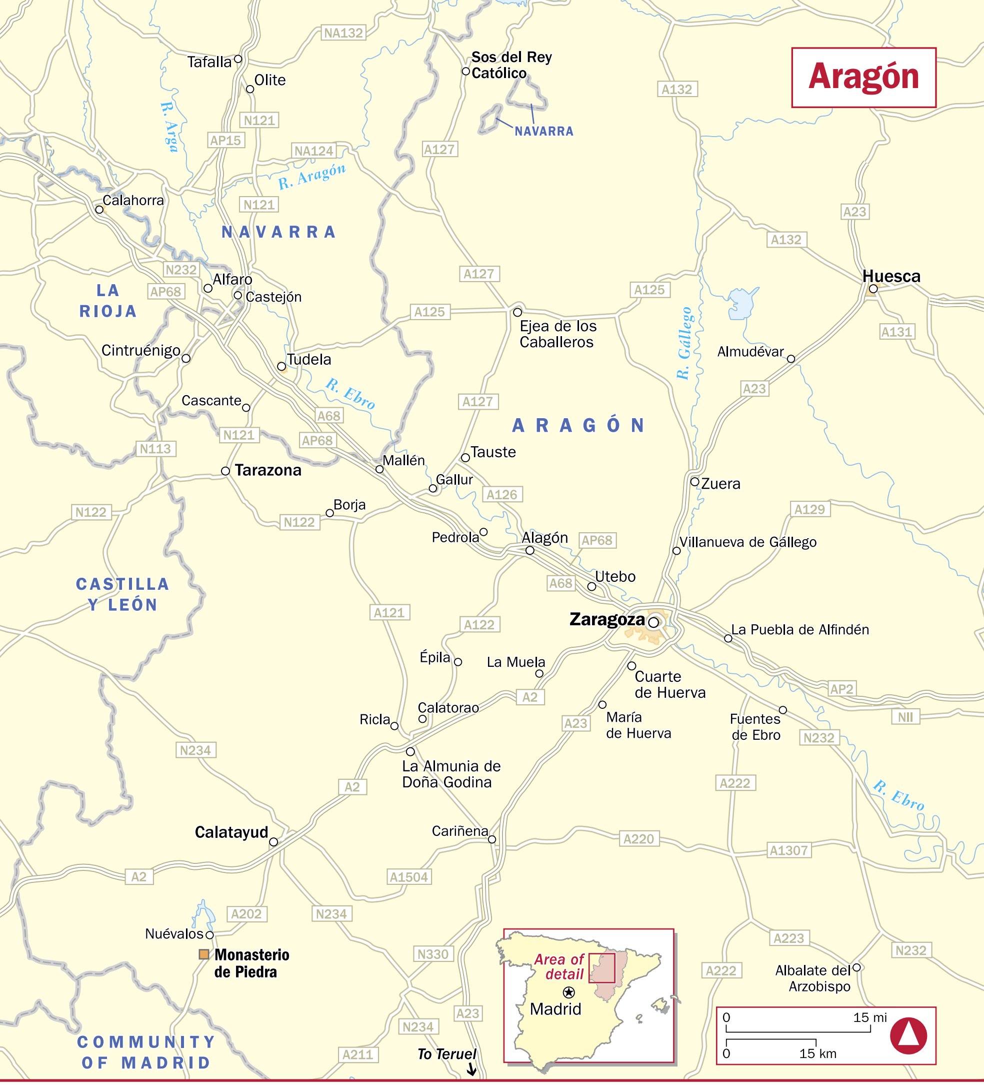
Basílica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar ★ CATHEDRAL This grandiose 16th- and 17th-century basilica on the bank of the Río Ebro has an almost Asian style with its domes and towers. Thousands of the faithful travel here annually to pay homage to the tiny statue of the ***Virgen del Pilar*** in the Holy Chapel. The name of the co-cathedral, **El Pilar,** comes from the pillar upon which the Virgin is supposed to have stood when she asked Santiago (St. James) to build the church. (Like Montserrat, p. 509, "Pilar" is a common Spanish woman's name, often conferred by devout parents.) During the second week of October, the church is a backdrop for an important festival devoted to Nuestra Señora de Pilar (Our Lady of the Pillar), with parades, bullfights, fireworks, flower offerings, and street dancing. Also of interest within the church are frescoes painted by Goya, who was born nearby. The baroque cupolas in the Temple of Pilar were decorated by Goya and Francisco Bayeu, another Zaragoza artist. You can also visit the **Museo del Pilar,** which houses the jewelry collection used to adorn the Pilar statue as well as sketches by Goya and other local artists. Much of the collection is ancient.

Plaza de las Catedrales. ✆ **97-629-95-64.** Free admission to cathedral; museum 1.50€. Cathedral Tues–Sun 7am–8:30pm. Museum daily 9am–2pm and 4–6pm. Bus: 22 or 23.

La Seo del Salvador ★ CATHEDRAL This Gothic-Mudéjar church, built between 1380 and 1550, is in many ways even more impressive than El Pilar (see above). The rich facade is a fine example of the Aragonese Mudéjar style and the structure is an exemplar of Aragonese Gothic architecture. Among its more important features are the main altar and a fine collection of French and Flemish tapestries from the 15th to the 17th centuries, which are housed in the adjacent museum.

Plaza de la Seo. ✆ **97-629-12-311.** Admission 3€. Nov–Apr Tues–Sun 10am–2pm and 4–6pm; May–Oct Tues–Sun 10am–2pm and 4–7pm. Bus: 21, 22, 29, 32, 35, 36, 43, 44, or 45.

The dome of La Seo del Salvador.


Aragón
Tafalla
Olite
Sos del Rey Católico
NAVARRA
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LA RIOJA
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Castejón
Cintruénigo
Tudela
R. Ebro
Cascante
Ejea de los Caballeros
R. Gállego
Huesca
Almudévar
ARAGÓN
Tauste
Mallén
Tarazona
Gallur
Zuera
Borja
Pedrola
Alagón
Villanueva de Gállego
Utebo
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
Zaragoza
La Puebla de Alfindén
Épila
La Muela
Cuarte de Huerva
Ricla
Calatorao
María de Huerva
Fuentes de Ebro
La Almunia de Doña Godina
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Museo de Zaragoza MUSEUM This museum is installed in a 1908 building with 10 ground-floor rooms devoted to exhibits from the prehistoric to the Muslim periods. The Roman legacy (nos. 4–8) has sculptures (including a bust of Augustus), mosaics, and ceramics. The museum is directly north of Paseo de Marino Moreno.

Plaza de los Sitios 6. www.patrimonioculturaldearagon.com. ✆ **97-622-21-81.** Free admission. Tues and Thurs–Sun 9am–1pm; Wed 9am–1pm and 4–6pm. Bus: 30, 35, or 40.

Museo Ibercaja Camón Aznar ART MUSEUM Not everything in central Zaragoza is Mudéjar or Roman. This superb little museum pays homage to the fact that Goya was born in Zaragoza. One entire floor is filled with minor Goya paintings (including a self-portrait and a portrait of Carlos IV and his wife) and a superb collection of his masterful, often surreal engravings. The graphic series include *Los Caprichos (The Whims), Los Disparates o Proverbios (The Follies or Proverbs), Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War),* and *Los Toros de Burdeos (The Bulls of Bordeaux).* Other floors display earlier art leading up to Goya, and later art proceeding from the master.

Espoz y Mina, 23. http://obrasocial.ibercaja.es. ✆ **97-639-73-28.** Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 5–8:30pm, Sun 10am–2pm. Bus: 30, 35, or 40.

Museo Pablo Gargallo ART MUSEUM This museum honors sculptor Pablo Gargallo, born in Maella in 1881. It is installed in a beautiful Aragonese Renaissance-style palace (1659) that was declared a national monument in 1963. Gargallo, influential in the art world of the 1920s, is represented by 100 original works, ranging from *Dr. Petit's Fireplace* (1904) to *Great Prophet,* a bronze piece from 1933. The museum is located in the center, a 5-minute walk south of El Pilar.

Plaza de San Felipe 3. www.zaragoza.es. ✆ **97-639-25-24.** Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 5–9pm; Sun 10am–2pm. Bus: 35 or 36.

Where to Eat

La Rinconada de Lorenzo ★ ARAGONESE Offering very traditional Aragonese fare (like fried rabbit with snails), "Larry's Little Corner" is always a good bet for roasted meats, especially the local suckling lamb, a controlled and registered D.O. product known as Ternasco de Aragón. You'll also find inexpensive dishes of *migas* (fried bread crumbs) with pieces of serrano ham and fresh grapes in season. There's always fresh fish on the menu, but you're better off sticking to more local ingredients, including wild boar and veal. In fact, try the veal meatballs served with beans. Aragón's red wines are one of the better-kept secrets of Spain, and Lorenzo mostly pours local bottles from the Calatayud, Somontano, and Cariñena regions.

Calle La Salle 3. www.larinconadadelorenzo.com. ✆ **97-655-51-08.** Reservations required. Main courses 7€–16€; fixed-price menus 17€–27€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–4pm and daily 8–11:30pm (closed Mon July–Aug). Bus: 20, 30, 35, 40, 41, or 45.

Los Borrachos ARAGONESE As formal as it gets in Zaragoza, this grand traditional restaurant underwent something of a transformation in 2011; the renovation brightened the whole appearance of the place while maintaining its hallmark fine service. Although the menu does have high-priced shellfish from Galicia and a lot of banquet dishes (hake with lobster, whole pheasant, and the like), the real strength of the kitchen lies in classically hearty cuisine of the Aragón highlands. Not only are there tiny lamb chops with mounds of garlicky potatoes, but you can also order a plate of lusty mutton chops. The tasting menus are a good way to go, offering considerable value. This restaurant's name, incidentally, translates as "The Drunkards," taken from the characters in a famous Velázquez painting.

Paseo Sagasta 64. ✆ **97-627-50-36.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–24€; tasting menus 36€–45€. DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Bus: 29.

Restaurante La Mar ★ SEAFOOD This is the top seafood restaurant in a city far from the ocean but only a few hours from the ports by train. Service is leisurely, so it's a good bet if you're in the mood for a prolonged meal. The menu includes a full range of seasonal vegetables, peppers stuffed with seafood mousse, *dorada* (gilthead sea bream) cooked in a salt crust, turbot with clams, grilled hake or monkfish, grilled squid, shellfish soup, or shellfish rice. For a change of pace from fish, try the grilled beefsteak with several choices of sauce. Because La Mar is close to the main government buildings and the courts, it attracts a lot of lawyers, judges, and politicians for the midday meal.

Plaza Aragón 12. ✆ **97-621-22-64.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–32€; fixed-price menus 65€–100€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Bus: 29.

Restaurante Risko Mar ★★ BASQUE Essentially a Basque *asador* (grill) that also serves a lot of seafood, Risko Mar bows deeply to tradition with dishes like leg of lamb fried with nearly as much garlic as meat, eye-popping large rib chops of Galician beef cooked bloody rare, or crisply grilled flounder. At the same time, the restaurant also dabbles in avant-garde cookery, preparing many dishes over a simple open flame in the manner of the Basque flame master Victor Arguinzoniz of Asador Etxebarri. Around Christmas, when *angulas* (glass eels) are in season, it is worth ordering the *merluza Risko Mar*—house-style hake served with fresh clams, baby eels, and green sauce.

Francisco de Vitoria 16–18. www.restauranteriskomar.com. ✆ **97-622-50-53.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–32€; *menú degustación* 38€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm; Sun 1:30–3:30pm. Closed 2 weeks at Easter. Bus: 33.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Zaragoza is a university town. It might seem sleepy and low-key in the early evening, but things perk up around 11pm. A good place to begin an evening's bar- and pub-crawl is Plaza Santa Cruz.

A popular tapas bar worth a visit is **Casa Luis,** Romea 8 (✆ **97-629-11-67**), whose array of shellfish tapas includes oysters, shrimp, and razor clams in little bundles. It's open most of the year (closed in June and last 3 weeks of Nov) Tuesday to Sunday 1 to 4pm and 7 to 11pm. A glass of house wine costs 1.50€, and the tapas range from 1.50€ to 6€.

If you want to just barhop and try different *tascas,* most of which aren't even identified with signs, consider a promenade along Calle Dr. Cerrada (near Plaza Pamplona), nearby Calle Dr. Casas, or on Calle La Paz.

Other hot spots around town include **Bull McCabe's,** Calle Cádiz 7 (www.bullmccabes.net; ✆ **97-622-50-16**), hailed by its patrons as the best Irish pub in Aragón. Spread across two floors, McCabe's offers pizza and sports on big TV screens, and it's open until 2:30am daily. McCabe's is for boys who like girls and vice versa; boys who like boys should head to **Mick Havanna,** Calle Ramón Pignatelli 7 (http://mickhavanna.es.tl; ✆ **97-628-44-50**), with its zebra-striped wallpaper and long bar peopled by bright-eyed young things. It's open daily 5pm to 2am.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Hotel Boston ★ This hotel, which opened in 1992, lies in the heart of Zaragoza's modern business district, a 15-minute walk from the medieval neighborhoods that most visitors want to explore. Named in honor of Boston, Massachusetts, where the building's architect earned his degree, it's one of the tallest buildings in town. The style is ultramodern throughout, even futuristic, strongly infused with postmodern design and American ideas. The guest rooms are plush, unusually spacious, with modern comforts and well-maintained bathrooms.

Camino de las Torres 28, 50008 Zaragoza. www.hotelboston.es. ☎ **97-659-91-92.** Fax 97-659-74-10. 312 units. 83€–250€ double; 160€–280€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€. Bus: 29. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Hiberus ★ This deluxe property lies next to the trade-fair site on the edge of Zaragoza, a short ride from the center of the city. Its well-maintained and beautifully furnished bedrooms open onto panoramic views of the Río Ebro. The property lies in well-landscaped garden areas with palm tree–shaded squares and terraces. The breakfast buffet is among the most generous in town. The hotel's gourmet restaurant, **Celebris,** serves contemporary Spanish food based on traditional products, and in summer you can dine on the outdoor terrace. Note that most rooms are far below maximum price except during convention bookings.

Paseo de los Puentes 2, 50018 Zaragoza. www.palafoxhoteles.com. ☎ **87-654-20-08.** Fax 87-654-20-09. 176 units. 61€–250€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hesperia Zaragoza This hotel in the historic center, a 5-minute walk from the basilica of El Pilar, has welcomed guests since 1994. A plain, modern exterior opens to reveal a marble-floor lobby where you'll encounter an efficient staff. There is no great stylishness here, but your comfort is ensured. The guest rooms are small but well furnished and inviting.

Conde de Aranda 48, 50003 Zaragoza. www.hesperia-zaragoza.com. ☎ **97-628-45-00.** Fax 97-628-27-17. 86 units. 59€–155€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Reino de Aragón ★ A short stroll from the historic district and literally around the corner from one of the best tapas-hopping sectors of Zaragoza, this superb modern business hotel has comfortable rooms, excellent service, and enough speedy and spacious elevators for everyone. Sixth-floor superior rooms have outdoor terraces with splendid views of the Mudéjar towers of the city.

Coso 8, 50001 Zaragoza. www.hoteles-silken.com. ☎ **97-646-82-00.** Fax 97-646-82-11. 117 units. 65€–145€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Gran Vía 🏷 This hotel on the Paseo Gran Vía, near the Church of Santa Engracia and close to the main shopping district, lacks character, but it is modern, welcoming, and comfortable, with bedrooms at very reasonable prices. You don't get a lot of frills here, as the rooms are small and functional, but the white walls, carpeted floors, excellent beds, and tidy bathrooms make for a restful stopover.

Calle Gran Vía 38, 50005 Zaragoza. www.granviahotel.com. ☎ **97-622-92-13.** Fax 97-622-07-07. 47 units. 43€–80€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; exercise room; Wi-Fi (4.50€ per 24 hr., in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Las Torres 🏷 This budget hotel stands directly opposite the cathedral of Zaragoza. It is a good choice if you're not too demanding. Bedrooms are small but well equipped and decently maintained with comfortable, motel-standard furniture. You can find better hotels than this in town, but not one this conveniently located. ***Note:*** Light sleepers beware—those church bells sound every 15 minutes throughout the night.

Plaza del Pilar 11, 50003 Zaragoza. www.hotellastorres.com. ✆ **97-639-42-50.** Fax 97-639-42-54. 52 units. 52€–62€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Cafe. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Husa Via Romana ★ 🎁 This find in the Old Town is a welcoming and comfortable base for exploring Zaragoza on foot. The 1988 hotel has been beautifully restored, with a well-trained staff and inviting midsize rooms with good furnishings and comfortable beds. For some reason, this hotel is fully booked in October, but you can easily make a reservation during other months.

Calle de Don Jaime I, nos. 54–56, 50001 Zaragoza. www.hotelhusaviaromana.com. ✆ **97-639-82-15.** Fax 97-629-05-11. 66 units. 41€–68€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€ nearby. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

NH Gran Hotel ★ 🏷 Nearly a kilometer (½ mile) south of the cathedral, behind one of the most beautiful Hispano–Art Deco facades in town, lies the most historic hotel in Zaragoza. Established by King Alfonso XIII in 1929, the Gran has an array of public areas and conference facilities. Guest rooms have been restored into a neutral, standard international style, and all have neatly kept bathrooms with tub-shower combos. A favorite of the business community, the hotel offers excellent service and good value.

Joaquín Costa 5, 50001 Zaragoza. www.nh-hoteles.com. ✆ **97-622-19-01.** Fax 97-623-67-13. 134 units. 75€–96€ double; from 104€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (22€ per 24 hr.).

Zenit Don Yo 🏷 Right in the center of town at the Plaza de Aragón and Plaza de la Independencia, this affiliate of the budget Zenit chain draws a repeat clientele among the business communities of Madrid and Barcelona. The hotel offers quiet, personal service, though it's not particularly well endowed with atmosphere. The midsize rooms aren't stylish, but you'll find them well maintained and relaxing, with especially good beds. For comfort and good value, Don Yo is an appealing choice.

Juan Bruil 4–6, 50001 Zaragoza. www.zenithoteles.com. ✆ **97-622-67-41.** Fax 97-621-99-55. 147 units. 51€–68€ double; from 75€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

TARAZONA

88km (55 miles) W of Zaragoza, 293km (182 miles) NE of Madrid

This handsome city on the border of both La Rioja and Navarra is noted for its architectural landmarks. They follow the **Mudéjar style** that reached its apogee in Aragón, when Christians and Muslims collaborated in the design, decoration, and construction of major buildings. Located about halfway along the principal route connecting Zaragoza to the province of Soria, it is laid out in tiers above the quays of the Río Queiles. Once the kings of Aragón lived here, and before that, the city was known to the Romans. You can walk through the old barrio with its tall facades and narrow medieval streets.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Zaragoza, six **buses** leave daily for Tarazona. Trip time is 1 hour, and a one-way fare costs 6.80€. For bus information and schedules, contact Therpasa (www.therpasa.es; ✆ **97-622-57-23**). If you're driving, head west from Zaragoza along the A-68, connecting with the N-122 to Tarazona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza San Francisco 1 (www.tarazona.org; ✆ **97-664-00-74**), is open daily 9am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 7pm.

Exploring Tarazona

Tarazona's major attraction is its Gothic **cathedral,** begun in 1152 but essentially reconstructed in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Aragonese Mudéjar style is still much in evidence, especially in the lantern tower and belfry. After many years of restoration, the cathedral is again open to visitors. From June 20 through September, it is open Sunday and Tuesday to Friday 11am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm. From October to late June, it is open Wednesday to Friday noon to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm.

The town is also known for its 16th-century **Ayuntamiento (Town Hall),** which has reliefs across its facade depicting Carlos V entering Bologna in 1529 to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor. The emperor is upstaged, however, by even larger murals depicting heroic deeds of Hercules, which tradition says were performed on a mountain southeast of town. Follow the **Ruta Turística,** a scenic walk, from city hall up to the church of **Santa Magdalena,** with a Mudéjar tower that forms the chief landmark of the town's skyline; its *mirador* opens onto a panoramic view. Continuing up the hill, you reach **La Concepción,** another church with a narrow brick tower.

A relief on the facade of Tarazona's Ayuntamiento.

Where to Stay & Eat

Brujas de Bécquer Nearly a kilometer (½ mile) southeast of town beside the road leading to Zaragoza, you'll find this unpretentious modern hotel, built in 1972 and renovated several times since. Guest rooms are modest but comfortable and bathrooms are neatly kept with shower stalls. The dining room serves delicious fixed-price meals, and reservations are almost never needed. The hotel, incidentally, was named in honor of a 19th-century Sevilla-born patriot and poet (Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer) who praised the beauties of Aragón in some of his writings.

Teresa Cajal 30, 50500 Tarazona. www.hotelbrujas.com. ✆ **97-664-04-04.** Fax 97-664-01-98. 56 units. 39€–72€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Condes de Visconti ★ This utterly charming small hotel occupies the small in-town palace of a Renaissance-era count. Located just steps from the main plazas of Tarazona, it is the perfect nest for exploring the town on foot (which is really the only way to do it). Decoration is often whimsical, even elegant, a medley of modern and traditional. Many of the bedrooms, which range from cozy to spacious, are decorated in a romantic style with draped beds. Objects of art and designer lamps, among other touches, add a certain glamour.

Calle Visconti 15, 50500 Tarazona. www.condesdevisconti.com. ✆ **97-664-00-74.** Fax 97-664-18-58. 15 units. 68€–90€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

NUÉVALOS & PIEDRA

118km (73 miles) W of Zaragoza, 230km (143 miles) E of Madrid

The town of Nuévalos, with its one paved road, isn't much of a lure, but thousands of visitors from all over the world flock to the **Monasterio de Piedra.**

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Madrid, **train** connections reach Alhama de Aragón. Take a taxi from there to the monastery. Driving from Zaragoza, head southwest on the N-II through Calatayud. At the little town of Ateca, take the left turnoff, which is marked for Nuévalos and the Monasterio de Piedra, and continue for 23km (14 miles). If you're driving from Madrid, take the N-II and turn east at the spa town of Alhama de Aragón.

Exploring the Monasterio de Piedra

Nuévalos's major attraction is the **Monasterio de Piedra ★★** (www.monasteriopiedra.com; ✆ **97-684-90-11**), dubbed "the garden district" of Aragón. Though *piedra* means "rock" in Spanish, the district is a virtual Garden of Eden—it even has a 60m (197-ft.) waterfall. It was here in 1194 that Cistercian monks built a charterhouse on the banks of the Río Piedra. The monks departed in 1835, but their former quarters are now a hotel (see below).

Two pathways, marked in blue or red, meander through the grounds, and views are offered from any number of levels. Tunnels and stairways dating from the 19th century are the work of Juan Federico

The Monasterio de Piedra.

Mutadas, who created the park. Slippery steps lead down to an iris grotto, just one of many quiet, secluded retreats. It is said the original monks inhabited the site because they wanted a "foretaste of paradise." To be honest, they were escaping the political intrigues at the powerful Monestir de Poblet (p. 519) in Tarragona province. The monastery at Piedra is only 3km (1¾ miles) from the hillside village of Nuévalos. You can wander through the grounds daily April to October 10am to 1:15pm and 3 to 7pm. During the rest of the year, daily hours are 10am to 1:15pm and 3 to 6pm. Admission is 7.50€ for adults and children.

Where to Stay & Eat

Monasterio de Piedra ★★ 🎁 This is one of the showplaces of Aragón. The grounds include a beautiful garden with small log bridges and masses of flowering plants and trees. The beautifully maintained guest rooms, which you should reserve well in advance, have phones and TVs but no other in-room amenities. Some open onto terraces, and all contain neatly kept bathrooms. Guests and nonguests dine on Aragonese cuisine here.

Calle Afueras, 50210 Nuévalos. www.monasteriopiedra.com. ✆ **97-684-90-11.** Fax 97-684-90-54. 61 units. 98€–178€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast and admission to the monastery. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

SOS DEL REY CATÓLICO

422km (262 miles) N of Madrid, 60km (37 miles) SW of Pamplona

The most visited town in northern Aragón is Sos del Rey Católico, so named because it was the birthplace of Fernando, the Catholic king, in 1452. Locals will point out the Palacio de Sada, where the king is said to have been born. The kings of Aragón fortified this village on the Navarra border with a thick wall. Much of that medieval character has been preserved—enough so that the village has been declared a national monument. The town itself is more interesting than its minor monuments, and you can wander its narrow, cobbled streets, stopping any place you fancy.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Zaragoza to Sos, a 1½-hour ride away, there is a daily **bus** at 7pm, returning at 7am the next morning. To drive from Zaragoza, take the N-330 to Huesca. Continue on the N-330 to Jaca, and then bear west on the N-240 toward Pamplona. Turn south at the cutoff to Sangüesa.

Where to Stay & Eat

Parador de Sos del Rey Católico ★ This member of the government-owned *parador* network is unusual because of the care that was taken to blend a six-story building into its medieval setting. Built in 1975, it's composed mostly of stone and wood timbers, with lots of interior paneling and antique-looking accessories. Despite its location in the heart of the village, sweeping views open from some of the windows onto the nearby countryside. Guest rooms vary, but all have quality beds and are well maintained and beautifully furnished. Aragonese food (lots of roast lamb, especially) is served in the restaurant. The entire *parador* closed in 2012 for a top-to-bottom renovation and will reopen in January 2013.

Sáinz de Vicuña 1, 50680 Sos del Rey Católico. www.parador.es. ✆ **94-888-80-11.** Fax 94-888-81-00. 58 units. 128€–172€ double; 256€–276€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Jan to mid-Feb. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (2€ per hr.).

TERUEL ★

174km (109 miles) S of Zaragoza, 303km (189 miles) E of Madrid, 145km (91 miles) NW of Valencia

Virtually an open-air museum of Mudéjar architecture, Teruel is visually stunning. In 1986, UNESCO designated the cathedral and three other churches in town as the Mudéjar Architecture World Heritage site. The city lies isolated in the hills northwest of Valencia and just over a mountain range from the monastery country of southwestern Catalunya. Indeed, the local version of Spanish sounds more like Catalan than Castellano. Teruel is not on the way to anywhere, but the sheer beauty of the town makes it worth a trip if you're anywhere in the vicinity. Teruel was once even more architecturally distinguished than you will find it today. It was the site of the bloodiest battle of the Spanish Civil War: From December 1937 to February 1938, during the coldest winter recorded in Spain up to that time, the city changed hands several times; more than 140,000 soldiers died and many of the city's medieval structures were destroyed in the bombardment.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Four trains per day arrive from Zaragoza in the north and Valencia in the south. Travel time is about 2½ hours from either direction and fares range from 14€ to 17€. Trains pull into Estación Teruel, Camino de la Estación (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**).

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza de los Amantes (www.dpteruel.es; ✆ **97-862-41-05**), is open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Teruel

Most visitors approach the old city from the north, walking up the 1920s neo-Mudéjar **L'Escalinata** stairs to enter town through the arch of the elaborately decorated 14th-century **Torre El Salvador.** The narrow street opens into the city's main square, **Plaza del Torico,** built around a fountain flowing from the mouth of a bull. The bull has been a civic symbol since Alfonso II captured the city in 1171. Teruel's Mudéjar style helped inspire 19th-century *modernisme* architecture, such as the striking **Caja Rural de Teruel,** a lilac-blue confection with white floral designs, on the Plaza del Torico.

Architecture experts consider the **Catedral de Santa María de Mediavilla ★★★** to be the most beautiful surviving example of Mudéjar architecture. Its towers, dome, and roof are all designated as part of UNESCO's World Heritage, but the coffered ceiling of the central nave is also a masterwork. It is located on the Plaza de la Catedral (✆ **97-861-80-16**). Admission is 3€ adults, 2.40€ seniors and students. It is open Monday to Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm (closes at 7pm in winter).

The 14th-century Mudéjar masterpiece **Iglesia San Pedro ★★** (www.amantesdeteruel.es; ✆ **97-861-83-98**) contains a chapel dedicated to Los

Amantes, ill-fated medieval lovers whose legend looms larger than the church's towers. Visiting, alas, is a package deal. You have to endure a lot of high-tech displays about the Romeo-and-Juliet tale before you finally get to the amazing church interior. San Pedro is on the Plaza de los Amantes. Admission is 8€ adults, and 6€ seniors and ages 8 to 15. It is open daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Hotel Reina Cristina The convenient location with its own dedicated parking just outside the Torre El Salvador gate makes this ample, modern hotel an ideal base for exploring the Old City. The hotel restaurant serves excellent Aragonese dishes with a menu based on market ingredients.

Paseo del Óvalo 1, 44001 Teruel. www.gargallohotels.es. ✆ **97-860-68-60.** 83 units. 65€–95€ double. Rates include breakfast buffet. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Teruel Located 2km (1¼ miles) outside the center of town, this modern hotel is ensconced in a mansion inspired by the Mudéjar style. The interior makes lavish use of marble, tiles, horseshoe arches, and carved plaster details. The spacious rooms are decorated in pastel tones and feature modern bathrooms with tub-shower combinations. The restaurant serves Aragonese cuisine, with a special focus on the local lamb. This also makes a good rest stop on a whirlwind tour of Spain, as the large grounds have a big swimming pool and tennis courts.

Carretera Sagunto-Burgos, N-234, Km 122.5, 44003 Teruel. www.parador.es. ✆ **97-860-18-00.** Fax 97-860-86-12. 60 units. 101€–137€ double; 252€–308€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NAVARRA & LA RIOJA

The ancient land of Navarra (Nafarroa in Basque, Navarre in English) shares a 130km (82-mile) frontier with France with nine crossing points, making it an important link between Iberia and the rest of the Continent. As a border region, Navarra has seen its share of conflict, and to this day the remains of lonely castles and fortified walled towns bear witness to that. But somehow this kingdom, one of the most ancient on the peninsula, has managed to preserve its own government and strong Basque traditions. Euskera and Castilian Spanish are both official languages of the autonomous region.

Romans, Christians, Muslims, and Jews have all left their stamp on Navarra, and its architecture is as diverse as its landscape. It is also a province rich in folklore. Pagan rites were blended with Christian traditions to form a mythology that lives on today in Navarra's many festivals. Dancers and singers wear the famous red berets, the *jota* is the province's most celebrated folk dance, and its best-known sport is *pelota*—sometimes called jai alai in other parts of the world.

Navarra is also rich in natural attractions, but most foreign visitors miss them when they come in July to see the **Fiesta de San Fermín** and the running of the bulls through the streets of Pamplona, Navarra's capital and major city. Even if you do visit for the festival, try to explore some of the panoramic Pyrenean landscape.

Adjoining Navarra is **La Rioja,** the smallest autonomous region of mainland Spain—bordered not only by Navarra but also by Castilla and Aragón. Extending along the Río Ebro, this province has far greater influence than its tiny dimensions would suggest: It is one of the most important winegrowing districts in Europe. The land is generally split into two sections: Rioja Alta, which gets a lot of rainfall and has a mild climate; and Rioja Baja, which is much hotter and more arid, like Aragón. The capital of the province is Logroño, a city of some 200,000 that links the two regions.

The most-visited towns are **Logroño** and **Haro,** the former known for its wine-shipping, the latter known for its wineries. **Santo Domingo de la Calzada** remains a major stop for the pilgrims en route to Santiago de Compostela, while **Nájera** once served as capital for the kings of Navarra. Now little more than a village, it lies along the Río Najerilla.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN NAVARRA & LA RIOJA

- **Walking the route where the bulls run:** For generations, the Navarrese have run in front of a pack of bulls from the highest plaza of Pamplona down to the bullring during the Fiesta de San Fermín. Walk the route when it's safe, and be amazed at how tight some passages are.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The running of the bulls in Pamplona.**

- **Watching baby storks try to fly:** Alfaro's Colegiata de San Miguel has the largest concentration of stork nests on any building in the world. Once the chicks are a few weeks old, they start to flap their stubby wings until, at a few months, they take to the sky.
- **Sipping a glass of vino at the City of Wine:** Frank O. Gehry certainly made a futuristic fantasy winery for the Marqués de Riscal. But the winery still makes a classic style of Rioja, which somehow tastes even better when sipped at the City of Wine's vinoteca.
- **Seeing the oldest written texts in Basque and Castilian:** Hidden in the hills of La Rioja, the Monastério de Yuso was such a center of medieval learning that its monks wrote the first manuscripts in both Basque and Castilian. See them on a guided tour.
- **Surveying the countryside from a fortress-church:** The medieval laborers and farmers of Navarra took refuge at the mountaintop fortress-church of Santa María de Ujué. Not only is it a beautiful structure with Gothic stone carvings of vineyard workers, its ramparts have sweeping views of the verdant countryside.

PAMPLONA/IRUÑA ★

90km (56 miles) SE of San Sebastián, 385km (239 miles) NE of Madrid, 168km (104 miles) NE of Zaragoza

Ernest Hemingway's descriptions of the running of the bulls in his 1926 novel, *The Sun Also Rises,* made **Pamplona** (**Iruña** in Basque) known throughout the world. The book's glamour remains undiminished for all the romantics who read it and then rush off to Pamplona to see the ***encierros*** (running of the bulls) during the Fiesta de San Fermín. Attempts to outlaw this world-famous ceremony have failed so far, and it remains a superstar attraction, particularly among bullfighting aficionados. The riotous festival usually begins on July 6 and lasts to July 14. Fireworks and Basque flute concerts are only some of the spectacles adding color to the fiesta. Wine flows and people party nonstop for the festival's duration. Those who want to know they'll have a bed after watching the *encierro* should **reserve a year in advance** at one of the city's handful of hotels or boardinghouses, or lodge in San Sebastián or another neighboring town.

But Pamplona is more than just a city where an annual festival takes place. Long the most significant community in Spain's Pyrenean region, it was also a major stopover for those traveling either of two frontier roads: the Roncesvalles Pass or the Velate Pass. Once a fortified city, it became the capital of the ancient Basque kingdom of Navarra in 824. The Basque name for the city, Iruña, gets equal billing in all public signage today.

In its historic core, the Pamplona of legend lives on, but the city has been engulfed by modern real-estate development. The saving grace of new Pamplona is La Taconera, a spacious green swath of fountain-filled gardens and parkland west of the Old Quarter where you will see students from the Universidad de Navarra.

Pamplona's Golden Age came at the beginning of the 15th century during the reign of Carlos III (called "the Noble"), who gave it its cathedral, where he was buried. Over the years, the city has been the scene of many battles, with various factions struggling for control. Those who lived in the Old Quarter, the

Navarraría, wanted to be allied with Castilla, whereas those on the outskirts favored a French connection. Castilla eventually won out, although some citizens of Navarra today want Pamplona to be part of a newly created country of the Basque lands.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Pamplona is the air hub of the Navarra region. The city is served by four to six weekday **Iberia** flights (www.iberia.com) from both Madrid and Barcelona; international connections can be made from either city. Arrivals are at **Aeropuerto de Noaín** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**), 6.5km (4 miles) from the city center and accessible only by taxi for about 15€.

Four RENFE **trains** a day arrive from Madrid (trip time: 3–3½ hr.) and three from Barcelona (trip time: 4 hr.). Pamplona also has two daily train connections from San Sebastián to the north (trip time: 1¾ hr.) and four daily from Zaragoza to the south (trip time: 1¾ hr.). For information, go to www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

Buses connect Pamplona with several major Spanish cities: four per day from Barcelona (trip time: 5½ hr.), eight per day from Zaragoza (trip time: 2 hr.), and seven per day from San Sebastián (trip time: 1 hr.). Instead of calling for information, you'll have to consult the bulletin board's list of destinations at the **Estación de Autobuses,** at Calle Conde Olivieto (corner of Calle Yanguas and Miranda). Nearly 20 privately owned bus companies converge here, in a mass of confusion.

The A-15 Navarra national highway begins on the outskirts of Pamplona and runs south to join A-68, midway between Zaragoza and Logroño. N-240 connects San Sebastián with Pamplona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Av. de Roncesvalles 4 (www.turismo.navarra.es; ✆ **94-842-04-20**), is open Monday to Saturday 9am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

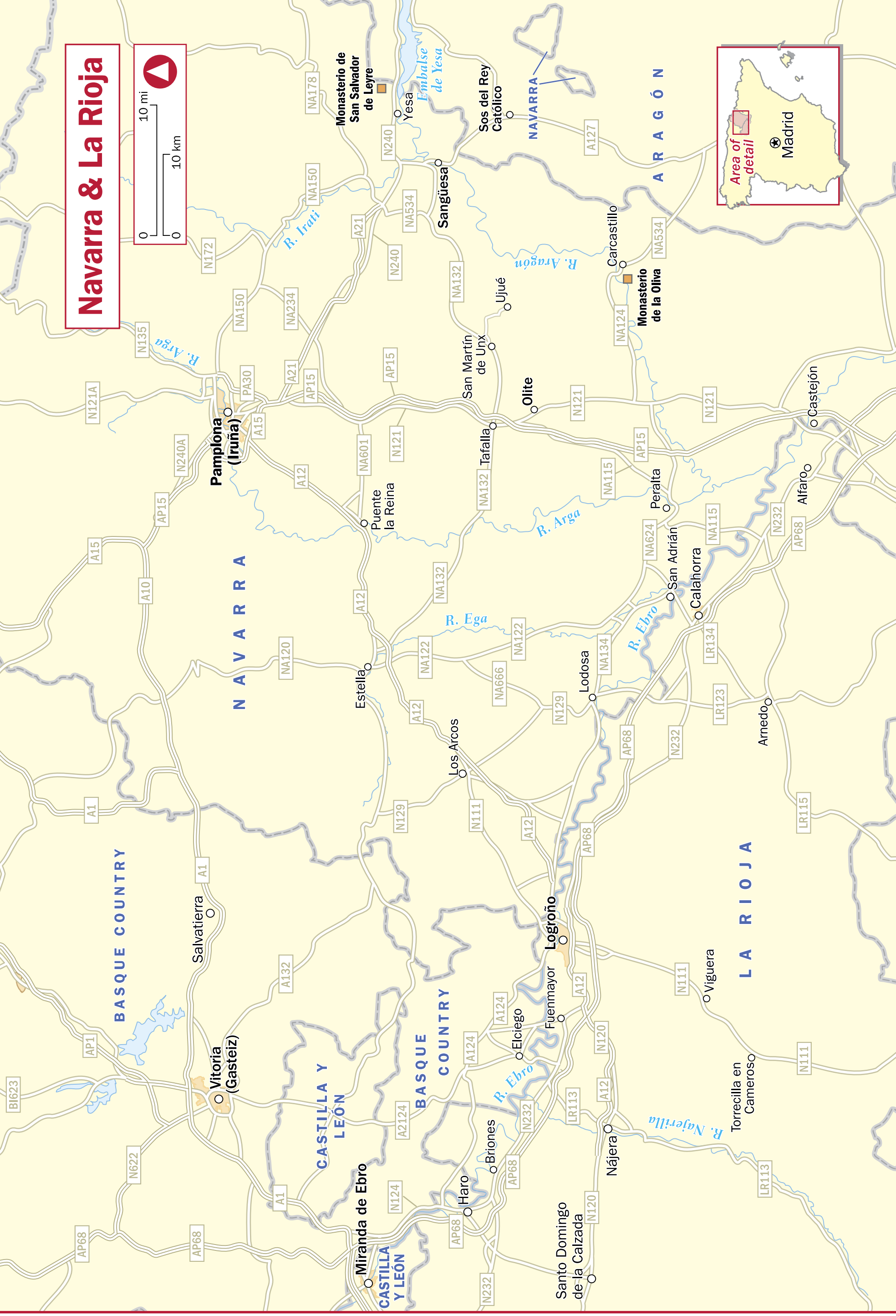
Exploring Pamplona

The heart of Pamplona is the **Plaza del Castillo,** formerly the bullring, built in 1847. Today it is the seat of the autonomous regional government. This elegant tree-lined plaza becomes something of a communal bedroom during the Fiesta de San Fermín, when visitors without hotel reservations literally sleep in the streets.

The narrow streets of the Old Quarter extend from three sides of the square. The present bullring, the **Plaza de Toros,** is just east and south of this square alongside Paseo Hemingway. Running parallel to the east of the square is **Calle Estafeta,** a narrow street that is the main course of the running of the bulls. With its bars and *tascas,* it attracts university students and is lively year-round. During the festival it is the most frequented place in town next to the Plaza del Castillo. The bulls also run through the barricaded streets of Santo Domingo, Santiago, and Mercaderes.

Catedral de Santa María ★ CATHEDRAL This is the most important sight in Pamplona, dating from the late 14th century on the site of a former Romanesque basilica. The present facade, a mix of neoclassical and baroque, was the work of Ventura Rodríguez, architect to Carlos III. The interior is Gothic with lots of fan vaulting. At the center is the alabaster tomb of Carlos III and his

Navarra & La Rioja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Embalse de Yesa
Sos del Rey Católico
Carcastillo
Monasterio de la Oliva
Ujué
San Martín de Unx
Olite
Tafalla
Puente la Reina
Estella
Los Arcos
Peralta
Castejón
Alfaro
San Adrián
Calahorra
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The facade of the Catedral of Pamplona.

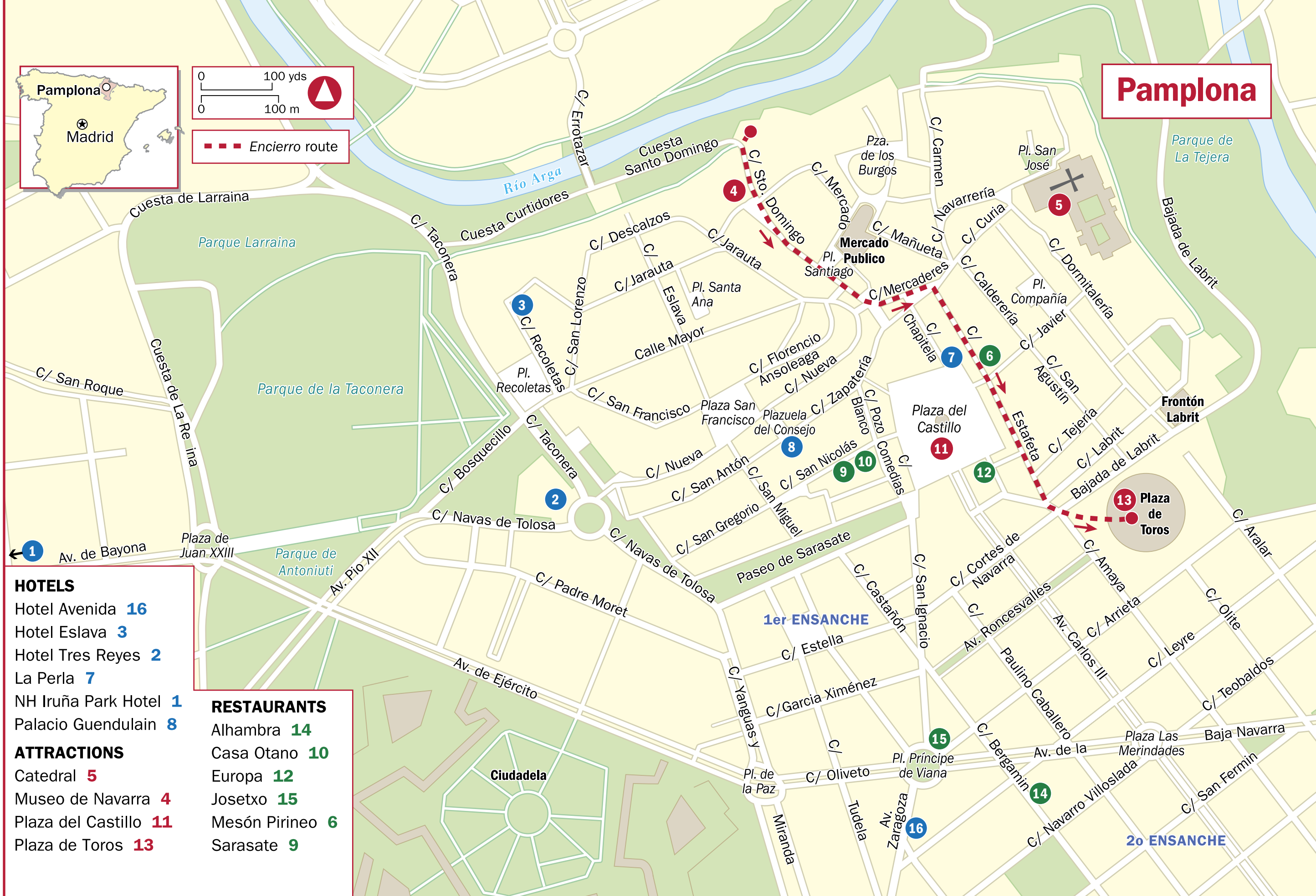
Castilian wife, Leonor de Trastámara, done in 1416 by Flemish sculptor Janin de Lomme. The alabaster death masks are haunting. (Alas, other early sculptures in the cathedral were vigorously overcleaned in a misguided restoration that stripped their patina and made them look like modern copies.) The 14th- and 15th-century Gothic cloisters are a highlight of the cathedral. The **Barbazán Chapel,** off the east gallery, is noted for its vaulting. The **Museo Diocesano,** housed in the cathedral's refectory and kitchen, displays religious objects spanning the era from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Calle Curia/Calle Dormitalería. www.catedraldepamplona.com. ✆ **94-821-25-94.** Free admission to cathedral; museum 4.50€. Mon–Fri 10am–1:30pm and 4–7pm; Sat 10am–1:30pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Museo de Navarra ★ MUSEUM The major museum of Pamplona is housed in a 16th-century hospital, Nuestra Señora de la Misericordia, close to the river. Its rich collections of Roman artifacts include a number of 4th-century mosaics. Other highlights include the striking early medieval Muslim stone carvings. Also on exhibit is Romanesque art, plus an important Goya portrait of the Marqués de San Adrián. Gothic and Renaissance paintings are on the second floor. The 13th-century Gothic frescoes are seriously faded but remain some of the best of their kind in Spain.

Attending a *Pelota* Match

While in Pamplona, you might want to head about 6km (3¾ miles) outside town to **Frontón Euskal–Jai Berri** (www.fundacionremonte.org; ✆ **94-833-11-59**), along Avenida de Francia, to check out a professional *pelota* (jai alai) match. Game times are Saturday at 4pm, as well as some Sundays and regional and national holidays. Four matches are usually played on game days, and tickets can be purchased anytime during the sets. Admission to the bleachers is 12€ to 15€. We recommend leaving the betting to the experts.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C/ San Francisco
Plaza San Francisco
C/ Florencio Ansoleaga
C/ Nueva
Plazuela del Consejo
C/ Zapatería
C/ Pozo Blanco
C/ Chapitela
7
C/ 6
C/ San Agustín
C/ Tejería
C/ Labrit
Bajada de Labrit
Frontón Labrit
Estafeta
Plaza del Castillo
11
12
C/ Comedias
8
C/ San Nicolás
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10
C/ Nueva
C/ San Antón
C/ San Miguel
C/ San Gregorio
13
Plaza de Toros
C/ Aralar
Parque de la Taconera
C/ Bosquecillo
C/ Taconera
2
C/ Navas de Tolosa
C/ Navas de Tolosa
Paseo de Sarasate
C/ San Roque
Cuesta de La Re ina
Plaza de Juan XXIII
Parque de Antoniuti
Av. de Bayona
1
Av. Pio XII
C/ Padre Moret
Av. de Ejército
Ciudadela
C/ Yanguas y
Miranda
Pl. de la Paz
1er ENSANCHE
C/ Estella
C/ Castañón
C/ San Ignacio
C/ Cortes de Navarra
C/
Av. Roncesvalles
C/ Amaya
Av. Carlos III
C/ Arrieta
C/ Olite
C/ Leyre
C/ Teobaldos
Paulino Caballero
C/Garcia Ximénez
C/ Oliveto
C/
Tudela
15
Pl. Príncipe de Viana
Av. Zaragoza
16
C/ Bergamin
14
Av. de la
Plaza Las Merindades
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C/ San Fermin
2o ENSANCHE

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Professional *pelota,* or jai alai.

Cuesta de Santo Domingo 47. www.cfnavarra.es/cultura/museo. ✆ **94-842-64-92.** Admission 2€ adults, 1€ students and seniors, free for children 15 and under, free for all Sat afternoon and all day Sun. Tues–Sat 9:30am–2pm and 5–7pm; Sun 11am–2pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Where to Eat

EXPENSIVE

Alhambra ★ NAVARRESE/BASQUE Operated by the brother and sister team of Iñaki and Esther Idoate, Alhambra has been one of the leading restaurants in town since it was established in 1985. Chef Javier Diaz Zalduendo pays homage to classical Navarrese cuisine, but is quick to pick up on the culinary innovations coming out of the nearby Basque country. You can start with a low-temperature poached egg with black truffle and crispy leek tempura—or go old style with roasted piquillo peppers. The chef gives the classic pork sirloin roast a decided twist by serving it with curried figs and a sauce based on the Navarrese liquer *patcharán,* distilled from blackthorn berries. Another good bet is local pigeon stewed in a tomato sauce with chives and sour fried croutons.

Bergamín 7. www.restaurantealhambra.es. ✆ **94-824-50-07.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 19€–25€; fixed-price menus 47€–56€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3pm and 9–11pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Europa ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE Located in the center of Pamplona near Plaza del Castillo, this is arguably the best restaurant in town. The chef and culinary artist is Pamplona-born Pilar Idoate (a relative of the owners of Alhambra, above), who prepares a seasonal menu. Examples of her cuisine include young lamb roasted in its own sauce and accompanied by a sweetbreads kabob; or carpaccio of sirloin steak stuffed with mushrooms. Another reinterpreted regional dish is her grilled turbot with refried potatoes treated with a sweet-and-sour chardonnay vinegar sauce. A spectacular dessert is mango with black chocolate over a mango carpaccio with clove-flavored ice cream.

THE RUNNING OF THE bulls

Beginning at noon on July 6 and continuing nonstop to July 14, the **Fiesta de San Fermín** is one of the most popular events in Europe, drawing thousands of tourists who severely overtax Pamplona's limited facilities.

Get up early (or don't go to bed at all), because the bulls run every day at 8am sharp. To watch, be in position behind the barricades along Calle Estafeta no later than 6am. Running is not a terribly bright idea, and should not even be considered unless you are athletic and sober.

There simply aren't enough beds or bullfight tickets to go around, and scalpers have a field day. Technically, tickets for a good seat in the ring go on sale at 8pm the night before the *corrida* (bullfight), and tickets for standing room go on sale at 4pm the day of the bullfight. Tickets sell out quickly, and because it is impossible to get them through travel agents beforehand, tourists have to use scalpers.

The fiesta draws half a million visitors, many of whom camp in the city parks. Temporary facilities are set up, but there are never enough beds. Hotel reservations should be confirmed *at least* 6 months beforehand—the tourist office will not make any recommendations during the festival. If you look respectable, some Pamplónicos may rent you a room. Be aware, however, that they may gouge you for the highest price they think you'll pay, and your room might turn out to be a dirty floor shared with others in a slum-like part of the city. Many young visitors sleep on the grounds of the Ciudadela and Plaza Fueros traffic ring, but muggings can occur. Longtime visitors to Pamplona advise that it's better to sleep in a group, on top of your belongings, and during the day. If you can't find a room, check your valuables at the bus station on Calle Conde Olivieto (where there are showers—free, but cold).

As for bars and restaurants, ignore all the times given in the listings beginning on p. 574. Most establishments operate round-the-clock during the festival.

Warning: Some people go to the festival not to watch the bulls but to pick pockets. Also, don't take needless risks, such as leaping from a building in the hope friends below will catch you. Many people do this, and not all are caught.

Calle Espoz y Mina 11. www.hreuropa.com. ✆ **94-822-18-00.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–28€; fixed-price menus 45€–62€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Easter. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Josetxo ★ BASQUE Still the grandest restaurant in town, Josetxo is run by a civic-minded local family with two generations of experience in the restaurant trade. The restaurant has a glorious history (and a Michelin star to back it up), but can be uneven, perhaps because most dishes are rather complicated and require great finesse to deliver. Be conservative in ordering, though, and you'll have a great time. Stick to straightforward dishes like the grilled monkfish with ribbons of bacon, roast venison with chestnuts and shallots, or *bacalao al pil-pil*. Dessert might be a chocolate truffle tart layered with orange-flavored cream. The restaurant is beside a busy traffic circle, 4 blocks south of the Plaza del Castillo.

Plaza Príncipe de Viana 1. www.restaurantejosetxo.com. ✆ **94-822-20-97.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 20€–28€; fixed-price menus 48€–70€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11pm. Closed Holy Week and Aug. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

MODERATE

Casa Otano ★★ NAVARRESE/BASQUE In the oldest part of town, on a narrow street off Plaza del Castillo, this is a busy and popular tavern with three dining rooms and a reputation for feeding generations of Pamplona residents since the 1950s. The menu includes grilled brochettes of fresh seasonal vegetables, hake cheeks roasted with the delicate but tangy Cristal peppers, grilled liver with apple purée and creamed potatoes, and a black truffle tart with hot chocolate sauce and ice cream. The bustling front bar specializes in creative *pintxos* (Basque tapas) following the model of the leading tapas bars of Bilbao and San Sebastian.

Calle San Nicolás 5. www.casaotano.com. ✆ **94-822-70-36.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 12€–36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 9–11:30pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

INEXPENSIVE

Mesón Pirineo ★ 🏷 BASQUE This dive is the best place in town for hearty appetites as the portions of Navarrese food are immense. Home cooking specialties, like bean stew, or roasted root vegetables with duck confit are always good bets. Fresh game (especially quail) is often featured. The chef, Iñaki Rodaballo, turns his primary creative energies to the tapas bar menu, preparing wonderfully inventive dishes like a duck confit and Idiazábal cheese cream mixed with crunchy vegetables, or a raviolo stuffed with seafood, accompanied by a chardonnay sauce.

Estafeta 41. ✆ **94-822-20-45.** Reservations not needed. Main courses 8€–32€; fixed-price menu (Mon–Fri) 18€; tapas 3€–7€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8–10:30pm; Sun 1–4pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Sarasate VEGETARIAN Above a fish market, this favorite of Pamplona students serves the best vegetable platters in town, including vegan or gluten-free offerings. Only the freshest vegetables from the countryside are used. Start with one of the soothing mixed fresh-fruit juices (the pomegranate is quite good), and follow with a selection of well-prepared dishes that make lavish use of fresh salad greens as well as beans and other produce. During Fiesta de San Fermín, the chefs break with the meatless regimen and even offer meat, poultry, and seafood. This is mainly a lunch eatery, but does serve dinner on weekends.

San Nicolás 32. www.restaurantesarasate.com. ✆ **94-822-57-27.** Reservations not needed. Fixed-price menu 11€. V. Sun–Thurs 1–4pm; Fri–Sat 1–4pm and 8:30–11pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 9.

Shopping

You'll find lots of Navarrese handicrafts in kiosks scattered through the Old Town, but for a particularly well-inventoried outlet, head for **Echeve,** Mercaderes 14 (✆ **94-822-42-15**). It sells such handcrafted items as vests, ceramics, hats, woodcarvings, and *botas* (wineskins), which locals use to squirt wine, with great dexterity, into their open mouths. A roughly equivalent competitor is **Las Tres ZZZ,** Comedias 7 (www.lastreszzz.com; ✆ **94-822-44-38**), which sells wineskins, neckerchiefs, and wide belts known as *gerrikos,* favored by weight lifters and sports enthusiasts who feel twinges in their backs when they're called upon to perform heavy-duty lifting.

Entertainment & Nightlife

In a city famous for bulls running through its streets, there's something consistent about the local habit of wandering through the city, particularly within the historic Old City. Three streets in particular—**San Nicolás, Estafeta,** and **Jarauta**—are lined with *tascas,* bars, bodegas, and pubs. Lots of them don't have signs, so wander in and out of whichever strikes your fancy.

The town's most popular club is **Marengo,** Av. Bayona 2 (www.discotecamarengo.com; ✆ **94-826-55-42**), a huge nightspot where a crowd in their 20s and 30s dances the night away to recorded music. Your dress code must pass inspection by a team of hardened doormen before you are allowed inside. Tickets to enter cost 15€, and hours are Thursday to Saturday 11pm to 6am.

Looking for a dance club where you can let off some late-night steam? Head for Pamplona's much-frequented disco, **Reverendos,** Monasterio de Velate 5 (www.reverendos.com; ✆ **94-826-15-93**), where 20- and 30-somethings dance, flirt, and drink till all hours. The cover charge is 10€, which includes the price of a drink.

Dating from 1888, the Art Deco **Café Iruña,** Plaza del Castillo 44 (www.cafeiruna.com; ✆ **94-822-20-64**), has an outdoor terrace that's popular in summer. The winter crowd is likely to congregate around the bar, ordering combination plates and snacks in addition to drinks. The place thrives as a cafe/bar daily from 9am to 9:30pm, but it becomes more of a restaurant during the lunch hour. Platters of hot food are served to local office workers and day laborers. The *menú del día* (menu of the day) is 13€. A full lunch, served daily from 1 to 3:30pm, costs 10€ to 12€. The cafe is open Monday to Thursday and Sunday 8am to 9:30pm; Friday and Saturday hours are 8am to 11:30pm.

Cafetería El Molino, Bayona 13 (✆ **94-825-10-90**), centrally located in the commercial barrio San Juan, doubles as a popular tapas bar. Late in the evening, the action really heats up. The huge assortment of tapas includes fried shrimp, squid, anchovies, fish croquettes, and Russian salad. Most tapas don't exceed 3€, although some of the more expensive ones go for 4€. It's open Thursday to Tuesday 9am to 2am.

Where to Stay

During the Fiesta de San Fermín, prices are three to four times higher than those listed below. In some instances, a hotel commits itself to prices it will charge at

Fiesta (*Fiesta* was the original name of *The Sun Also Rises* when it was first published in Britain). Other owners charge pretty much what they want. Therefore, agree on the price when making a reservation—that is, if you've been able to get a reservation in the first place.

MODERATE

Gran Hotel La Perla ★ Opened in 1880 and last renovated in 2007, the hotel has been radically altered, its bedrooms reduced in number and made larger when La Perla went from 67 bedrooms to only 44. During the festival it becomes *the* place to stay, because it opens onto the main square of Pamplona and overlooks Calle Estafeta, the straightaway of the *encierro* through which the bulls run. The rooms are furnished with contemporary, comfortable pieces. In days of yore the hotel sheltered everybody from Ernest Hemingway to U.S. Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge.

Plaza del Castillo 1, 31001 Pamplona. www.granhotellaperla.com. ✆ **94-822-30-00.** Fax 94-822-23-24. 44 units. 140€–287€ double; from 395€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 29€. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Tres Reyes A short walk west of Old Town, just 2 blocks north of the ancient citadel, this is one of the better hotels in Pamplona, though some of the furnishings are beginning to show their age. It provides tasteful, airy rooms decorated in contemporary style. The rooms are bright thanks to large windows, and private bathrooms are equipped with tub/shower combos. Many rooms have balconies, and all are welcome refuges from the intensity of local festivities.

Jardines de la Taconera 1, 31001 Pamplona. www.hotel3reyes.com. ✆ **94-822-66-00.** Fax 94-822-29-30. 160 units. 88€–185€ double; 464€–500€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 20€ indoors; free outside. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (13€ per 24 hr.).

NH Iruña Park ★ A short walk west of Parque de la Ciudadela in the suburbs, this is the largest and best hotel in town, often the site of conventions. A large staff maintains the blandly furnished but comfortable guest rooms, and bathrooms are well equipped. Public areas are modern and glossy, with deep armchairs and big windows.

Arcadio María Larraona 1, 31008 Pamplona. www.nh-hoteles.com. ✆ **94-819-71-19.** Fax 94-817-23-87. 225 units. 69€–109€ double; 113€–152€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

Palacio Guendulain ★★ The finest boutique hotel in Pamplona has been installed in a restored palace built in the 18th century by Don Sebastián de Eslava in the old part of town. It has served as a family residence for 2 centuries, and in 1845 was turned into a temporary royal residence by Isabel II. The descendents of the counts of Guendulain continue to live in the palace, having turned over the second and third floors for guest bedrooms. Their collection of antique carriages is on display. The sumptuous bedrooms (many containing their original furniture) come in three categories—classic, deluxe, and suites with separate living areas. But even the least expensive rooms are elegant and well appointed with deluxe toiletries and modern amenities. The on-site restaurant offers classic cuisine based on seasonal produce and traditional Basque and Navarrese recipes.

Zapatería 53. www.palacioguendulain.com. ✆ **94-822-55-32.** 25 units. 134€–167€ double; 205€–267€ suite. MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Avenida 🎁 This small, well-run place opened in 1989 and is one of the best inns in town. The midsize guest rooms have furnishings that tend toward the sleek and modern, and local watercolors add a warm touch. Some units—slightly larger with a small balcony—are an especially good deal.

Zaragoza 5, 31003 Pamplona. www.hotelavenida.biz. ✆ **94-824-54-54.** Fax 94-823-23-23. 24 units. 60€–78€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Eslava 🎁 Right off the Plaza de Recoletas, and a 10-minute walk from the bus station, this renovated hotel manages to combine the spirits of old and new Spain. Its small living room resembles the drawing room of a distinguished Spanish house. The average-size guest rooms are tastefully decorated; some have balconies with views of the city walls and the vistas beyond. All come with comfortable beds and brightly scrubbed bathrooms.

Plaza Virgen de la O 7 (corner with Calle Recoletas 20), 31001 Pamplona. www.hotel-eslava.com. ✆ **94-822-22-70.** Fax 94-822-51-57. 28 units. 69€–73€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 3, 4, 9, or 16. Closed Dec 26–Jan 6. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi (free).

OLITE ★

44km (27 miles) S of Pamplona, 369km (229 miles) N of Madrid

Historic Olite is a castle town that sits in a rich agricultural district with a Mediterranean climate of short winters and long, hot summers. Cornfields and vineyards cover the countryside. Olite is also the center of a winemaking industry carried on by cooperative cellars. These wine merchants hold a local festival each year in mid-September.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Four **trains** per day run from Pamplona to Olite, taking 40 minutes one-way. For rail information, call ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

Two **bus** companies, **Alsa** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**) and **La Tafallesa** (www.whatpamplona.com/bus-pamplona.html; ✆ **94-870-01-99**), run from Pamplona to Olite at the rate of 7 to 12 buses per day. The trip takes 35 to 45 minutes.

By car, take the A-15 expressway south from Pamplona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza Teobaldos (www.turismo.navarra.es; ✆ **94-874-17-03**), is open June to September Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. October to May hours are weekdays from 10am to 5pm and weekends from 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Olite

In the 15th century, this Gothic town was a favorite address of the kings of Navarra. Carlos III put Olite on the map, ordering that the **Palacio Real** (✆ **94-874-00-35**), Plaza Carlos III el Noble, be built in 1406. The towers and

Olite's Palacio Real.

lookouts make visiting a romantic adventure. April through September, hours are daily 10am to 7pm (to 8pm July–Aug); October to March, hours are daily 10am to 6pm. Admission is 3.10€ adults; 1.60€ children 5 to 16, students, and seniors; and free for children 4 and under. A guided tour is available for 6€. It's closed December 25, January 1, and January 6.

Next to the castle on Plaza Teobaldos stands a Gothic church, **Santa María la Real de Olite** (✆ **94-874-17-03**), with a splendid 12th-century doorway decorated with flowers—a favorite backdrop for wedding photographs. The church is open for viewing for a half-hour before Masses, which take place Monday to Saturday at 10am and 7pm and Sunday at 11am and 6:30pm.

Also on the plaza is the fine **Museo de la Viña y el Vino** (www.museodelvinodenavarra.com; ✆ **948-74-12-73**), which chronicles winemaking in Navarra since Roman days but concentrates on recent advances in viticulture and technology. Admission is 3.50€ adults, 2€ seniors and students. It is open from Easter to mid-October Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, Sunday 10am to 2pm. From mid-October to Easter it closes 1 hour earlier in the afternoon.

Navarra wines are among the hottest wines in Spain right now, as ancient vineyards have met modern viticulture and an eager domestic market. The local rules permit "French" grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot as well as the traditional indigenous varieties like Tempranillo and Graciano. Although the region is just beginning to develop wine tourism, **Bodega Marco Real** (www.familiabelasco.com; ✆ **94-871-21-93**) outside town has tours and tastings that will open your eyes—and taste buds—to Navarra wine. The winery is located at Km 38 on N-121. A guided tour and tasting costs 7€. Tours run Friday and Saturday at 10:30am, 12:30 and 4:30pm; on Sunday at 10:30am and 12:30pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Parador de Olite ★★ This state-run *parador* in the center of town is in one of the wings of the Palacio Real (see above). Surrounded by watchtowers, thick walls, and massive buttresses, the building is one of the most impressive sights in town. Only 16 guest rooms, however, are in the *parador*'s medieval core, and they go for a premium over their comfortable counterparts, which are in a new wing, added in 1963, when the castle became a *parador*. Regardless of their location in the compound, the rooms are dignified and quite comfortable, each with a well-equipped bathroom.

Plaza de los Teobaldos 2, 31390 Olite. www.parador.es. ✆ **94-874-00-00.** Fax 94-874-02-01. 43 units. 110€–163€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Restaurante Túbal ★★★ NAVARRESE For a gourmet treat while you're in the area, consider driving directly north 15 to 20 minutes to the village of Tafalla, lying on the AP-15 leading to Pamplona. In this restaurant on the main square, you'll meet Atxen Jiménez, grande dame of Navarrese gastronomy. Foodies from miles around flock to her dining room; the kitchen is run by her talented son Nicolás. Túbal seems to be known as the "Garden of Eden" for its fresh vegetables, including Spain's best asparagus, and scarlet *piquillo* peppers, not to mention fava beans and artichokes. Start with natural goose pâté or creamed cod cheeks and go on to pigeon in its own juices or *patorrillo* (a rich stew of lamb offal). Although Tafalla is inland, it's just over an hour by delivery truck from the docks of San Sebastian, so Túbal is able to serve wonderfully fresh fish dishes, such as grilled sea bass with a tomato-and-onion sauce or even grilled lobster.

Plaza de Navarra 4, Tafalla. www.restaurantetubal.com. ✆ **94-870-08-52.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat noon–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm; Sun noon–3:30pm. Closed Aug 21–Sept 4.

Side Trips from Olite

High up on a mountain of the same name, a short drive east along a secondary road from Olite, **Ujué** seems plucked from the Middle Ages. Built as a defensive town, it has cobbled streets and stone houses clustered around its fortress **Iglesia-Fortaleza de Santa María de Ujué ★**, dating from the 12th to the 14th centuries. The heart of Carlos II ("the Bad") was placed to rest here. The church towers open onto views of the countryside, extending to Olite in the west and the Pyrenees in the east. Recently restored, the main portal is covered with 12th-century stone carvings that show laborers in the vineyards.

Rustic Lodgings in the Navarra Countryside

If you have some time to spend in the area, consider a rental at one of the home stays sponsored by Navarra Tourism. They range from rooms in old farmhouses in the mountains to simple lodgings in homes in the region's small hamlets. Sometimes fully equipped apartments are available. In nearly all cases, these lodgings are extremely reasonable in price and very affordable for families who'd like to experience the great outdoors in this often-overlooked part of Spain. Called *casas rurales,* the lodgings are documented in detail in a helpful guide called *Guía de Alojamientos de Turismo Rural.* These guides are distributed free at any of the tourist offices in Navarra, including the one at Pamplona. For more information, see the website at www.navarraseleccion.com or call the office at ✆ **94-829-13-27,** where some staff members speak English.

On the Sunday after St. Mark's Day (Apr 25), Ujué is an important pilgrimage center for the people of the area, many of whom, barefoot and wearing tunics, carry large crosses. They come to Ujué to worship Santa María, depicted on a Romanesque statue dating from 1190. It was plated in silver during the second half of the 15th century.

You might also consider checking out the **Monasterio de la Oliva ★** (www.monasteriodelaoliva.eu; ✆ **94-872-50-06**), 34km (21 miles) south of Olite. It was founded by Navarra king García Ramírez in 1164 and is an excellent example of Cistercian architecture. This monastery, one of the first to be constructed by French monks outside France, once had great influence; today the most notable feature is its 14th-century Gothic cloisters. The late-12th-century church is even more impressive than the cloisters. It has a distinguished portal and two rose windows. Pillars and pointed arches fill its interior. The monastery was built to solidify the Christian hold on what was, in the 12th century, a borderland between Muslim and Christian rule. The Cistercians not only brought their signature architecture and stern Christianity from Burgundy, but they also brought wine grapes and the know-how to cultivate them. Today the lands around the monastery produce more good wine than any time in the last 800 years. The monastery is open daily from 9:30am to 12:30pm and 3:30 to 6pm. Guided visits are available.

It's a modest detour from the monastery across the regional border to the southernmost tip of La Rioja to visit the town of **Alfaro,** which has a **tourist office** (www.alfaro.es; ✆ **94-118-01-33**) at Plaza de España 1, open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm. The massive 17th-century baroque church on the same plaza is the **Colegiata de San Miguel.** From February to August, more than 400 nests of white storks cover the towers and roofs of the church. Ornithologists say it is the world's largest single concentration of the species, and many a study of stork behavior has been researched in Alfaro. The young begin to fledge across the summer, and parents and chicks alike take to the air late in the afternoon, giving the small city an animated majesty. By late August, they begin their migration back to North Africa. The **Mirador de Cigueñas ★** (or "stork overlook") is along one side of the church and provides an ideal vantage for photography.

TUDELA

84km (52 miles) S of Pamplona, 316km (196 miles) N of Madrid

The ancient city of Tudela, in the center of the food belt of the Río Ebro Valley, is the second largest in Navarra, but with a population of only 30,000. Situated on the right bank of the Ebro, it has a long history as a city where Jews, Arabs, and Christians lived and worked together. The Muslims made it a dependency of the Caliphate at Córdoba, a period of domination that lasted until 1119. The city had a large Moorish quarter, the *morería,* and many old brick houses are in the Mudéjar style. The giant king Sancho VII "El Fuerte" (2.23m/7 ft., 3 in. tall) chose Tudela as his favorite residence in 1251. It has been the seat of an archdiocese since the 18th century.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Tudela lies on the southern rail line south of Pamplona. Two **RENFE trains** (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) pass through here, one connecting La Rioja to Zaragoza via Castejón de Ebro. The other train links

The courtyard of the Catedral de Santa María.

Zaragoza with Vitoria-Gasteiz via Pamplona. Schedules are subject to change, so call ahead.

Alsa buses (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**) go to Tudela from Pamplona at the rate of 12 per day (trip time: 1¼ hr.). If you're driving, take A-15 south from Pamplona.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Juicio 4 (www.turismo.navarra.es; ✆ **94-884-80-58**), is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. The office closes at 7pm in February and March.

Exploring Tudela

Begin your exploration of Tudela at the central Plaza de los Fueros, where you can wander through a maze of narrow alleys laid out during the Moorish occupation.

At the square called Plaza Vieja, Tudela's most important monument, **Catedral de Santa María ★**, is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 1pm. Admission is 3€. Constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries, its facade has an outstanding work of art, the *Doorway of the Last Judgment,* with about 120 groups of figures. Creation is depicted, but the artisans were truly inspired in showing the horrors of hell. The church contains many Gothic works of art, such as choir stalls from the 1500s. Several chapels are richly decorated, including one dedicated to Our Lady of Hope, with masterpieces from the 15th century. The main altar contains an exceptional *retablo* painted by Pedro Díaz de Oviedo. The small but choice cloisters are the highlight of the tour, however, and cost 1€ to enter. Dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, they contain many Romanesque arches. Capitals on the columns include scenes from the New Testament.

Where to Stay & Eat

Hotel Tudela Bardenas This is one of the best choices for an overnight stopover. Directly in front of the bullring (Plaza de Toros), this hotel was built in the 1930s and tripled in size by 1992. Today it is modern and functional, with a polite and helpful staff. Rooms, though a bit boxy and standardized, are nevertheless comfortable and have well-maintained bathrooms.

The in-house bar-restaurant emulates a Scottish-style pub, **Pub Number Sixty,** with a striking number of ales on tap to accompany the (fortunately) Spanish food. It attracts a lively crowd before and after bullfights. There is also a service restaurant that serves dependable beef and Navarra lamb dishes.

Av. Zaragoza 60, 31500 Tudela. www.tudelabardenas.com. ✆ **94-841-08-02.** Fax 94-841-09-72. 46 units. 59€–85€ double; 85€–100€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

SANGÜESA

407km (253 miles) N of Madrid, 47km (29 miles) SE of Pamplona

Sangüesa is on the left bank of the Río Aragón, at the Aragonese frontier. A monumental town in its own right, Sangüesa can also serve as a base for excursions in the area, including visits to some of Navarra's major attractions, such as **Castillo de Javier (Javier Castle)** and the **Monasterio de Leyre.**

Long known to the Romans (who failed to conquer the Basque armies here), Sangüesa was later involved in the battle against Muslim domination in the 8th through 11th centuries. It has seen many wars, including occupation by supporters of Archduke Charles of Austria during the War of Spanish Succession in 1710, and many a skirmish during the Carlist struggles of the 19th century, when many northern Spanish territories sought to remove Isabel II from the throne. On several occasions it has been the seat of Navarra's parliament. Pilgrims crossing northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela have stopped at Sangüesa since the 10th century.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Three **buses** bound for Sangüesa leave from Pamplona daily (trip time: 45 min.); for information, call ✆ **94-887-02-09.** If you're driving from Pamplona, take the secondary road N-240 to Sangüesa.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Mayor 2 (www.turismo.navarra.es; ✆ **94-887-14-11**), is open Easter to September Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm; October to Easter, hours are Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Sangüesa

Iglesia de Santa María ★, on Calle Mayor (✆ **94-887-01-32**), stands at the far end of town beside the river. Begun in the 12th century, it has a doorway from the 12th and 13th centuries that is an outstanding work of Romanesque art. The **south portal,** filled with remarkably carved sculptures, is Santa María's most outstanding feature. The vestry contains a 1.5m-high (5-ft.) processional monstrance from the 15th century. The church is open daily 10am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 6:30pm; admission is free.

Nearby **Iglesia de Santiago,** on Calle Santrago 18 (✆ **94-887-01-32**), is a late traditional Romanesque structure from the 12th and 13th centuries. It has a battlement-type tower and contains an impressive array of Gothic sculptures, discovered under the church only in 1964. Look for the bizarre statue of Santiago atop a big conch. The church is open 30 minutes before Mass Monday to Friday at 8:30pm, Sunday noon and 8pm; admission is free.

Where to Stay & Eat

If after visiting the town you want to spend the night in the area, you can check in at the hotel reviewed below, or you can drive 15km (9⅓ miles) south to one of the most charming towns of Aragón, Sos del Rey Católico (p. 564). It features an excellent *parador.*

Hotel Yamaguchi The best place to stay among extremely limited choices is this hotel, .4km (¼ mile) outside town on the road to Javier. The small rooms are functional, modern, clean, and comfortable, each with a good bed and a neatly kept bathroom. The many Navarrese dishes served in the restaurant include lamb stew and steak (entree prices 13€–18€). You can also sample award-winning wines from local producers.

Carretera de Javier s/n, 31400 Sangüesa. www.hotelyamaguchi.com. ✆ **94-887-01-27.** Fax 94-887-07-00. 40 units. 61€–67€ double; 69€–76€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Side Trips from Sangüesa

LEYRE

The **Monasterio de San Salvador de Leyre ★** (www.monasteriodeleyre.com; ✆ **94-888-40-11**) is 16km (10 miles) east of Sangüesa, perched on the side of a mountain of the same name, overlooking the Yesa Dam. Of major historic and artistic interest, the main body of the monastery was constructed from the 11th to the 15th centuries on the site of a primitive pre-Romanesque church; in time, it became the spiritual center of Navarra. Many kings, including Sancho III, made it their pantheon. Its **crypt,** consecrated in 1057, ranks as one of the country's major works of Romanesque art.

When the church was reconstructed by the Cistercians in the 13th century, the bays of the old Romanesque church were retained. The outstanding and richly adorned 12th-century west portal is called the **Porta Speciosa** and is covered with intricate carvings. In one section, Jesus and his disciples are depicted atop mythical creatures. Some of the other artistic treasures of this once-great monastery are displayed at the Museo de Navarra in Pamplona.

Although the monastery was seized by the state in 1836, it was restored and returned to the Benedictine order in 1954. The monks make excellent wine (for sale) and offer tours of the church and the burial crypt of the kings of Navarra. You can also hear them singing Gregorian chants during services Monday through Saturday.

If you're tired of spending time in the car, stretch your legs on the hiking path to the summit of **Mount Leyre** that leaves from the parking lot. A less strenuous walk leads to a mountain spring and a picnic area.

The monastery is 4km (2½ miles) from Yesa, which itself is on N-240, the major road linking Pamplona, Sangüesa, and Huesca. Take the N-240 into Yesa, and then follow an uphill road marked LEYRE to the monastery. Visits are possible daily from 10:15am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm. Admission is 2€ for adults and .50€ for children 6 to 12.

At Leyre you'll also find one of the most unusual lodging options in Navarra, the **Hotel Hospedería de Leyre,** Monasterio de Leyre, 31410 Yesa (www.hotelhospederiadeleyre.com; ✆ **94-888-41-00**). This inn with 30 units (all with bathrooms) was created from the annexes constructed by the Benedictines in the 1700s. Guest rooms open onto views of the Yesa Reservoir. The rate is 70€ to 85€

The Castillo de Javier, outside Sangüesa.

for a double room, and parking is free. The hotel **restaurant,** which serves good Navarrese food in a rustic setting, is open daily 8:30 to 10am, 1 to 3:30pm, and 8 to 10pm. The Hospedería is closed from December 10 to March 1.

CASTILLO DE JAVIER

The second major excursion possible in the area is to **Castillo de Javier ★** (www.santuariodejavier.org; ✆ **94-888-40-24**), 8km (5 miles) from Sangüesa. The castle dates from the 11th century, but owes its present look to restoration work carried out in 1952. Francisco Javier, patron of Navarra, was born here on April 7, 1506 (in English he is known as St. Francis Xaviar). He and Ignatius Loyola co-founded the order of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in the mid–16th century. The castle houses a magnificent 13th-century crucifix, and thousands of the faithful congregate at Javier on two consecutive Sundays in March. This is the most popular pilgrimage in Navarra. Known as the Javierada, it pays homage to San Francisco Javier, who was canonized in 1622.

During your visit to the castle, view the oratory, the guard chamber, the great hall, and the saint's bedroom. The castle teems with interesting art, including a 15th-century fresco called the *Dance of Death*. To drive to the castle, take the N-240 to Yesa and then follow an unmarked road that's signposted CASTILLO DE JAVIER. The castle is open daily from 10am to 1:30pm and 3:30 to 7pm in summer (until 6pm in winter). Admission is 2€ for adults and 1€ for children.

For food and lodging, go to the tranquil **Hotel El Mesón,** Plaza de Javier, 31411 Javier (www.hotelmeson.com; ✆ **94-888-40-35**), right in the center of the hamlet of Javier on the same unmarked road as the castle. Management rents eight comfortably furnished rooms, but the hotel is closed from December 15 to February. Doubles go for 80€, and parking is free. The hotel's **restaurant** offers the best food in the area, with a fixed-price menu going for 25€.

LOGROÑO ★

330km (205 miles) N of Madrid, 92km (57 miles) W of Pamplona

The capital of the autonomous region of La Rioja, Logroño is also the major distribution center for the area's wines and agricultural products. Because La Rioja is so small, Logroño can serve as your base for touring the province's major attractions. Although much of Logroño is a typical rural business center, its Old Quarter is familiar to pilgrims crossing this region to visit the tomb of Santiago at Santiago de Compostela (p. 672). Encased in medieval walls, the Old Quarter can be explored in about 1½ hours. Its most typical and beautiful streets are **Muro Francisco de la Mata** and **Breton de los Herreros.** But keep in mind that this is a wine town, and the main activity is not sightseeing but rather sipping at a bar or *tasca,* eating a few bites, having a pleasant conversation with the folks at the next table, and then moving on to another bar or *tasca* to repeat.

Essentials

GETTING THERE There are four daily **RENFE trains** (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) from Barcelona (trip time: 4–5 hr.) and one per day from Madrid (trip time: 3½ hr.). From Bilbao in the north, two trains arrive per day (trip time: 2½ hr.).

Five **buses** arrive daily from Pamplona (trip time: 1 hr.) and five from Madrid (trip time: 5 hr.). For information, call ✆ **94-123-58-03.**

If you're driving, take N-111 southwest from Pamplona or A-68 northwest from Zaragoza.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Portales 50 (www.logroturismo.org; ✆ **94-127-33-53**), is usually open Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. From July to September, the office is open daily 9am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm.

Exploring Logroño

The earliest known guide to the Camino de Santiago, the 12th-century manuscript called the *Codex Calixtinus,* makes a point of singling out Logroño as a safe haven for travelers. The pilgrims entered the east end of town on the 11th-century **Puente de Piedra** (stone bridge), which still crosses the Río Ebro, though it has lost its three fortified guard towers. The street called **Rúa Vieja** is the old pilgrim path, and it leads directly to the ancient **Pilgrim's Fountain,** where pilgrims rest and wash before going in to pray in the 16th-century **Iglesia Santiago El Real** at Calle Barriocepo 6. It is open every evening for services.

Continue on the Camino de Santiago (marked with the scallop shell) a few blocks to the far more ornate **Catedral de Santa María de la Redonda,** Plaza del Mercado (✆ **94-125-76-11**). The vaults date from the 1400s, but the baroque facade dates from 1742. Inside, you can visit its 1762 **Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels,** built in an octagonal shape with rococo adornments. Constructed on top of an earlier Romanesque church, today's cathedral is known for

Wining Up

About a third of all Rioja wine production comes from the Río Najerilla's valleys. From September 20 to 26, the **Wine Harvest Festival** (✆ **94-129-12-60**) takes place throughout the region of La Rioja. Barefoot locals stomp upon grapes spilling from oak casks, and area vineyards showcase their wares. Other activities include dances, parades, music, and bullfights.

its broad naves and twin towers. Admission is free. It's open Monday to Saturday 8am to 1:30pm and 6:30 to 8:45pm, and Sunday 9am to 2pm and 6:30 to 8:45pm.

From the square on which the cathedral sits, walk up Calle de la Sagasta until you reach the 12th-century **Iglesia de Santa María de Palacio,** on Marqués de San Nicolás, once part of a royal palace. The palace part dates from 1130, when Alfonso VII offered his residence to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Most of what he left is long gone, of course, but there remains a pyramid-shaped spire from the 13th century.

Wine shops are ubiquitous in Logroño's Old Quarter, especially along Calle Portales and the nearby side streets. Continue on the Camino de Santiago to walk through the heart of Logroño, exploring the gardens of the broad **Paseo del Espolón.** In the late afternoon, all the residents turn out for their *paseo,* or stroll.

While in Logroño, you can visit **Bodegas Olarra,** Polígono de Cantabria s/n (www.bodegasolarra.es; ✆ **90-213-10-44**), open Monday to Friday from 9am to 1pm and 3 to 7pm. It produces wines under the Otonal and Olarra labels. Admission is free, but reserve a tour at least 2 weeks in advance. Bodegas Olarra is closed in August and during the Wine Harvest Festival.

Also on the outskirts, the barrel-aging facility of **Bodegas Ontañón** ★ (www.bodegasontanon.com; ✆ **94-123-42-00**) at Av. de Aragón 3 receives visitors. You won't see grape-receiving bays or fermentation vessels, but the barrel rooms are highlighted by the Perez family's extensive collection of sculpture, art and stained glass—almost all with a wine theme. Tours end at the tasting table. The tour and tasting costs 4€ and reservations are required. Tours are offered Monday through Saturday at 11am, noon, 5, and 6pm, and Sunday at 11am and noon.

Where to Eat

Asador Emilio ★ RIOJAN An ample air-conditioned bar greets you as you enter Asador Emilio, which serves primarily roasts, especially goat and beef. You can also enjoy peppers stuffed with cod, or baked hake. And some of the finest Rioja wines come from the well-stocked wine cellar. Asador Emilio is south of the Old Town, directly west of the major boulevard, Vara de Rey.

República Argentina 8. www.asadoremilio.com/marcos.htm. ✆ **94-125-88-44.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–28€; fixed-price menu 25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Aug.

Juan & Juan 🏷 RIOJAN There are many other better-rated restaurants in Logroño—and a lot more expensive ones—but this intimate restaurant is one of the most appealing. Brothers Juan Manuel and Juan Marcos welcome guests into their little enclave, plying them with an array of tasty local specialties, backed up by an affordable selection of local wines. The portions are generous, the dishes well prepared, including such specialties as *lomo a la plancha* (loin of pork), roast goat, or tender, succulent lamb flavored with garlic.

Calle San Agustín 5. ✆ **94-122-99-83.** Reservations not necessary. Fixed-price dinner menu 12€–25€; fixed-price lunch menu 12€–20€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11pm; Sun 1:30–4pm.

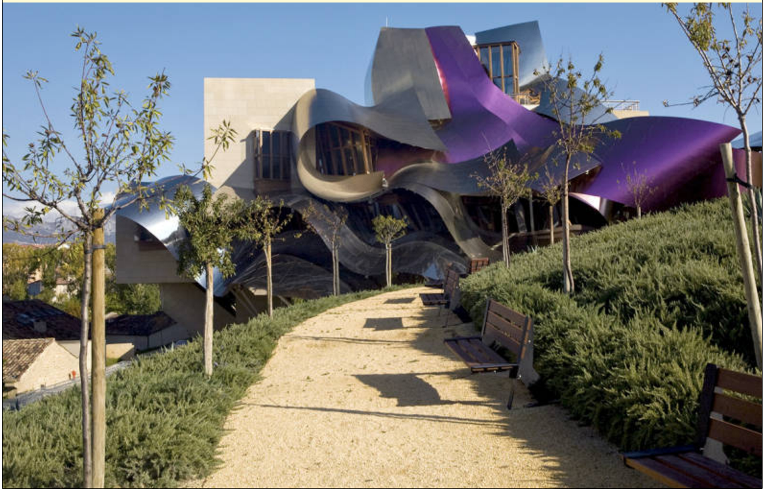
Where to Stay

Hostal La Numantina 🏷 This rather simple hotel, one of the best bargains in town, is on a street central to both the historic core and the commercial

The Superstar Architect & the Luxury Hotel

The architect Frank Gehry became even more famous than he already was when he designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (p. 624). He also designed the luxury hotel **Marqués de Riscal ★★★**, Calle Torrea 1 (www.luxurycollection.com/marquesderiscal; ✆ **94-518-08-80**), at Elciego, just over the border into the Basque Country. It's 26km (16 miles) northwest of Logroño, and about 129km (80 miles) south of Bilbao, in the heart of La Rioja wine region. The 43-room "new-style" hotel, booked as a Starwoods Luxury Collection property, has many of the architectural characteristics of the Guggenheim Museum. The roof, for example, is constructed from curved plates of titanium suspended at different angles and tinted silver, gold, and rose. The design of the exterior of the hotel is meant to evoke a "grapevine just before the fruit is harvested." The elegant rooms are all about windows; there are even window seats that follow the zig-zagging contours of the exterior glass. The architect said he wanted "to make the view part of the room." The hotel is very pricey, charging 304€ to 364€ for a double, with suites costing 440€ to 700€. A Michelin-starred restaurant is on-site, as is an indoor heated swimming pool, a fitness center, and even a spa offering "wine treatment therapies."

The hotel is part of an entire complex that Gehry designed for venerable La Rioja wine house, the Marques de Riscal. The company modestly calls it **La Ciudad del Vino,** or "City of Wine" (www.marquesderiscal.com; ✆ **94-518-08-80**). Gehry incorporated many of the structures of the 19th-century winery into his grand gestures of fanciful style. The store and wine bar accept casual visits—you can easily taste and buy. If there's room, you might be able to join a tour, although reservations are technically required. Tour and tasting costs 10€; call to arrange a time. The store and wine bar are open daily 10am to 7pm.



district. Its small and basic rooms are clean and reasonably comfortable, each with a good bed and a tidy bathroom with shower. No breakfast is served, but you can buy pastries at a shop across the street.

Calle Sagasta 4, 26001 Logroño. www.hostalnumantina.com. ✆ **94-125-14-11.** Fax 94-125-16-45. 17 units. 59€ double. MC, V. Closed Dec 22–Jan 7. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hotel Murrieta 🏷 At the western border of the historic part of town, a block north of the Gran Vía, this rather bland and boxy nine-story 1980s hotel offers midsize, comfortable, pristine rooms at a good rate. Units contain private, well-maintained bathrooms.

Marqués de Murrieta 1, 26005 Logroño. www.pretur.es. ✆ **94-122-41-50.** Fax 94-122-32-13. 104 units. 45€–54€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

HUSA Bracos ★ Many wine merchants who come to Logroño frequent this most up-to-date hotel in town. It has an elegant reception area and the most helpful staff in town. The street on which it's located is one of the best known in the city, and although it used to lie outside the walls, Logroño has now expanded here. The midsize rooms are handsomely furnished, if rather monotonous in style. Many good restaurants and cafes are practically outside the front door on Calle Laurel.

Bretón de los Herreros 29, 26001 Logroño. www.husa.es. ✆ **94-122-66-08.** Fax 94-122-67-54. 71 units. 57€–179€ double; from 115€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Side Trips from Logroño

Located about 42km (26 miles) southwest of Logroño, **San Millan de la Cogolla** is often considered the cradle of both the Castilian and Basque languages. The small village was the home of 13th-century poet and author Gonzalo de Berceo, the first major literary figure to write in the Castilian dialect. He was educated here by the monks of **Monasterio de Yuso** (www.monasteriodeyuso.org; ✆ **94-137-30-49**), a magnificent compound that ranges from an 11th-century walled keep to a striking 16th-century church. The sacristy holds secular as well as religious treasures, including the first written examples of both the Basque and Castilian languages, which were removed from the nearby, vacant Suso monastery for safekeeping. The monastery is open for tours Tuesday through Sunday 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 6:30pm. The tour costs 4€ adults, 3€ seniors, and 1.50€ ages 8 to 14. Tickets are also sold here for a strictly controlled visit via minibus to the more ancient **Monasterio de Suso** on the hill above town. Founded in 550, Suso consists of a Visigothic core with Mozarabic enlargements from the 11th century and a Romanesque section from the 13th.

The Yuso monastery also makes superb La Rioja wines, which are available on site at the wing of the compound that was converted in 1995 into a comfortable and serene hotel, **Hospedería del Monasterio de San Millán** (www.sanmillan.com; ✆ **94-137-32-77**). It is also an excellent place to spend the night in any of the 25 large and airy rooms. Double rooms are 106€ to 135€.

HARO

359km (223 miles) N of Madrid, 48km (30 miles) NE of Logroño

Base for the wine tours of the Rioja Alta district, the region around Haro has been compared to Tuscany. Come here to taste the wine at the bodegas, as international wine merchants do year-round (but especially after the autumn harvest).

Essentials

GETTING THERE Four to five **RENFE trains** (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) run daily from Logroño (trip time: 45 min.). There are also two to three connections per day from Zaragoza (trip time: 3–3½ hr.).

Six to seven **buses** per day run to Haro from Logroño (trip time: 45 min.–1 hr.). For information, call ✆ **94-123-59-83.**

If you're driving, follow the A-68 expressway (south of Logroño) northwest to the turnoff for Haro.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza Monseñor Florentino Rodríguez s/n (www.lariojaturismo.com; ✆ **94-130-33-66**), is open October to June Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm, and Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm; July to September hours are Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS Every June 29, the **Battle of Wine** erupts. It's an amusing, mock-medieval brawl in which opposing teams splatter each other using wineskins filled with the output from local vineyards.

Exploring Haro

Haro itself deserves a look before you head for its surrounding **bodegas.** The Old Quarter is filled with mansions, some from the 16th century; the most interesting ones lie along **Calleja del Castillo.** At the center of the Old Quarter is the town's major architectural landmark, **Iglesia de Santo Tomás,** Plaza de la Iglesia. Distinguished by its wedding-cake tower and Plateresque south portal, the 16th-century church has a Gothic interior. The tower's cupola is echoed in the bandstand on the adjacent **Plaza de la Paz.**

You could spend up to 3 days touring the wineries in town, but chances are that a few visits will satisfy your curiosity. **Bodegas Muga,** Av. Vizcaya s/n (www.bodegasmuga.com; ✆ **94-130-60-60**), near the rail station, offers tours (usually

The casks of Bodegas Muga.

in Spanish) of its wine cellars by prior arrangement. You can simply taste the wines and get a bite to eat at the *vinoteca* Monday to Friday 7am to 3pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm. The winery is closed at Easter and August 1 to 15.

You can also visit the atmospheric underground cellars of **Rioja Alta,** Av. Vizcaya s/n (✆ **94-131-03-46**), not far from Muga. It's open Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm. Visits must be arranged in advance.

In 2009, the wine industry decided to take a load off the wineries and opened a very authoritative **Centro de Interpretación del Vino de la Rioja** ★ (www.vinodelarioja.org; ✆ **94-130-57-19**). Three floors of exhibits, interactive computer displays, and video clips cover everything from planting the vines to shipping the bottles so that you can delve more deeply into the history, science, and aesthetics of Rioja wines. The center is located in the Estación de Enológica de Haro at Calle Bretón de los Herreros 4. Admission is 3€ adults, 2€ seniors and students. It is open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 2:30pm and 3:30 to 7pm; Saturday 10am to 7pm; and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

If you arrive in Haro in August or the first 2 weeks in September, when many of the bodegas are closed, settle instead for drinking wine in the *tascas* that line the streets between Parroquia and Plaza de la Paz. After a night spent there, you'll forget all about the bodega tours. Some of the finest red wines in Spain are sold at these *tascas,* along with tapas—all at bargain prices.

Where to Eat

Beethoven I, II, y III ★ 🏷 RIOJAN Haro's premier restaurant in the center of town is actually three air-conditioned restaurants adjacent to each other. All offer good food and value, and the wine cellars are among the finest in the area. They're justifiably famous for their platters of wild mushrooms, which chef María Angeles Frenso forages for herself. Try the stuffed filet of sole, vegetable stew, or wild pheasant, and finish it off with an apple tart.

Santo Tomás 3–5. www.restaurantebeethoven.com. ✆ **94-131-11-81.** Reservations required in summer. Main courses 16€–26€. MC, V. Wed–Mon 1:30–4pm; Wed–Sun 8:30–11:30pm.

Terete ★ 🎁 RIOJAN This *asador* (restaurant specializing in roasts) has been around since 1867 and is beloved by locals for its roast lamb. The staff can be abrupt, but the food is savory and succulent. The kitchen shows an uncharacteristic fondness for fresh vegetables, and the local fresh asparagus is reason enough to eat here in the early spring. When local peaches become available in late June, dessert is settled without looking at the menu. Only Rioja wines are served.

Lucrecia Arana 17. www.terete.es. ✆ **94-131-00-23.** Reservations recommended. Main dishes 12€–28€. DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:15–4pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1:15–4pm. Closed July 1–15 and Oct 15–31.

Where to Stay

Hotel Ciudad De Haro Nearly a kilometer (½ mile) southeast of the city on the highway, this Haro hotel should be your second choice. (Hotel Los Agustinos, below, should be your first.) The small but comfortable rooms are attractively furnished, many with impressive views. Ample parking facilities are available.

Carretera N-124, Km 41, 26200 Haro. www.ciudadeharo.com. ☎ **94-131-12-13.** Fax 94-131-17-21. 57 units. 60€–70€ double; 104€–114€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Los Agustinos ★★ This former Augustinian convent is now a polished and classy hotel in the center of Haro. Since its restoration and reopening in 1990, it has become the most desirable place to stay in a town that has always had too few accommodations. Owned by a Basque chain of hotels, it is in a "zone of tranquillity" (pedestrian zone). Rooms are well appointed and comfortable, each equipped with a good bed.

Calle San Agustín 2, 26200 Haro. www.aranzazu-hoteles.com. ☎ **94-131-13-08.** Fax 94-130-31-48. 62 units. 80€–130€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

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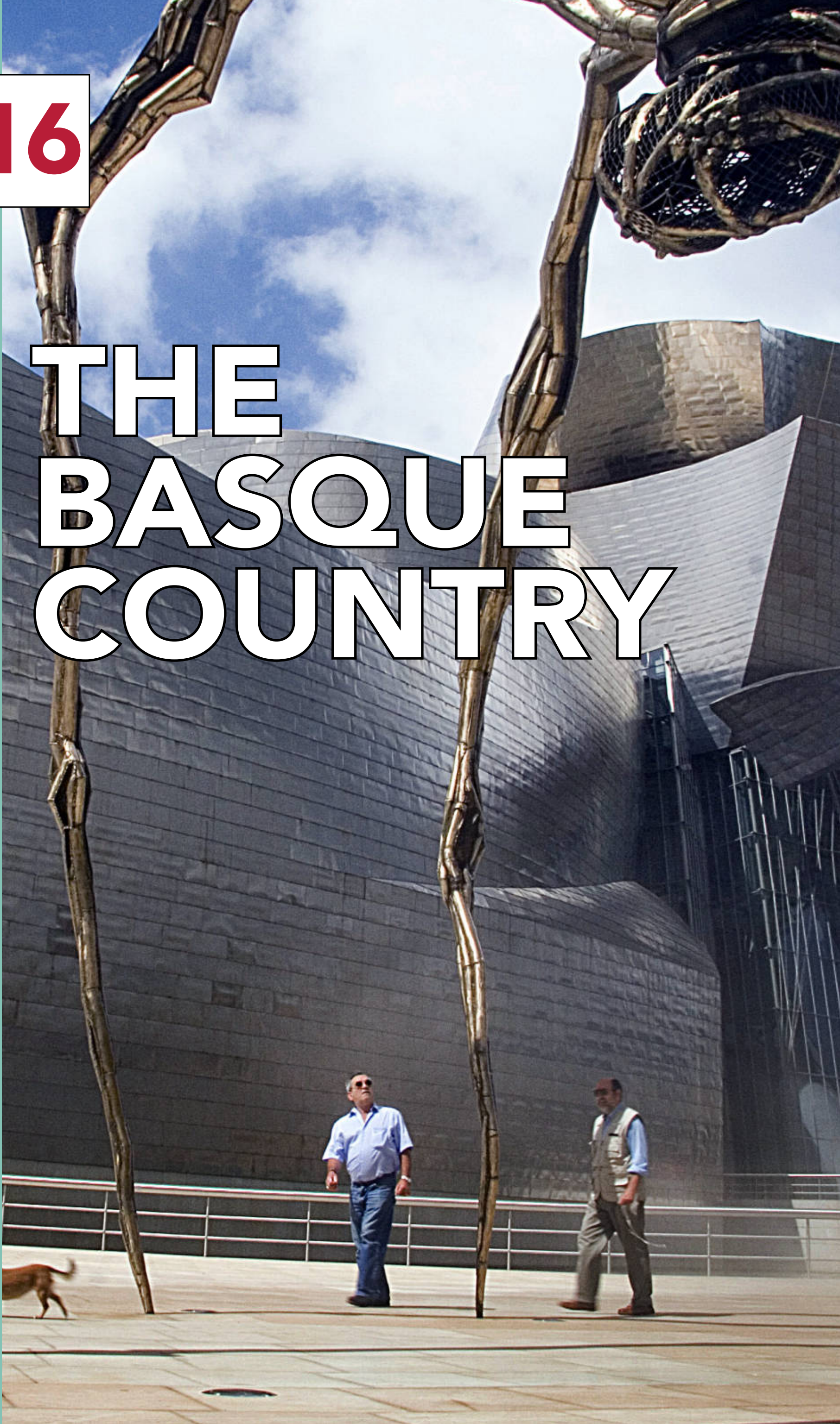
THE BASQUE COUNTRY



The Basque Country (El Pais Vasco in Castilian) is seductive. Visitors come in droves to see the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, only to discover that there is so much more: a dynamic modern city and a nearby coastline of long sandy strands, rocky promontories, and great surfing. They venture a little farther and plumb the depths of Basque identity at Gernika (Guernica in Castilian) and discover the utter pleasure of the Basque table in the Belle Epoque beach resort of San Sebastián. Given a little more time, they venture into the mountains—the great Basque stronghold from which this enigmatic people have rebuffed would-be conquerors for millennia. Basque Country is still Spain, but it is Spain with a decidedly piquant accent.

The Basques are the oldest traceable ethnic group in Europe. Their language, Euskera (also spelled Euskara, Uskara, or Eskuara, depending on the dialect), predates any of the commonly spoken Romance languages; its origins, like those of the Basque race itself, are lost in obscurity. One theory holds that the Basques are descended from the original Iberians, who lived in Spain before the arrival of the Celts some 3,500 years ago.

The region calls itself Euskadi, which simply means "collection of Basques" in Euskera. In the strictest sense it refers to three provinces: Guipúzcoa (whose capital, **San Sebastián,** features the Playa de la Concha, one of Spain's best-loved stretches of sand); Viscaya (whose capital is the exciting, rejuvenated industrial city of **Bilbao**); and inland Álava (with its capital at **Vitoria-Gasteiz**). Basque nationalists dream of forging a new nation that will one day unite all the Basque lands; in their minds, Euskadi also refers to the northern part of Navarra and three provinces in France, including the famed resort of Biarritz.

The three Spanish Basque provinces occupy the eastern part of the Cantabrian Mountains, between the Pyrenees and the valley of Río Nervión. They maintained a large degree of independence until the 19th century, when they finally gave in to control from Madrid, which had continued to recognize the ancient rights and privileges granted by the Romans until 1876.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the Basques were on the losing side, and subsequent oppression under Franco led to deep-seated resentment against Madrid. The Basque separatist movement, ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna,* or Basque Nation and Liberty), and the French organization Enbata (Ocean Wind) engaged unsuccessfully in guerrilla activity in 1968 to secure a united Basque state. Many Basque nationalists still wish that the Basque people could be united into one autonomous state instead of being divided between France and Spain.

The riddle of the Basque language has puzzled linguists and ethnologists for years; its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary are unrelated to those of any other European language. Although on the wane since the beginning of this century,

PREVIOUS PAGE: **Louise Bourgeois's spider sculpture, *Maman,* outside the Guggenheim Bilbao.**

the Basque language is enjoying a modest renaissance; it's taught in schools, and some TV stations broadcast in the language. Basque place names have been revived and appear on all street and road signage.

Basques wear a *boina,* a beret of red, blue, or white wool, as a badge of pride and sometimes as a political statement. You may see nationalist graffiti, slogans such as **euskadi ta askatasuna.** Although the separatist movement simmers on a back burner, the economic progress of the Spanish Basque region in the 21st century has eroded the appeal of nationalism. The Basques are pragmatists, and compared to the rest of Europe, things are pretty good in Basque Country. You'll find most people friendly and welcoming. Politics rarely intrude on vacationers in this beautiful corner of Spain.

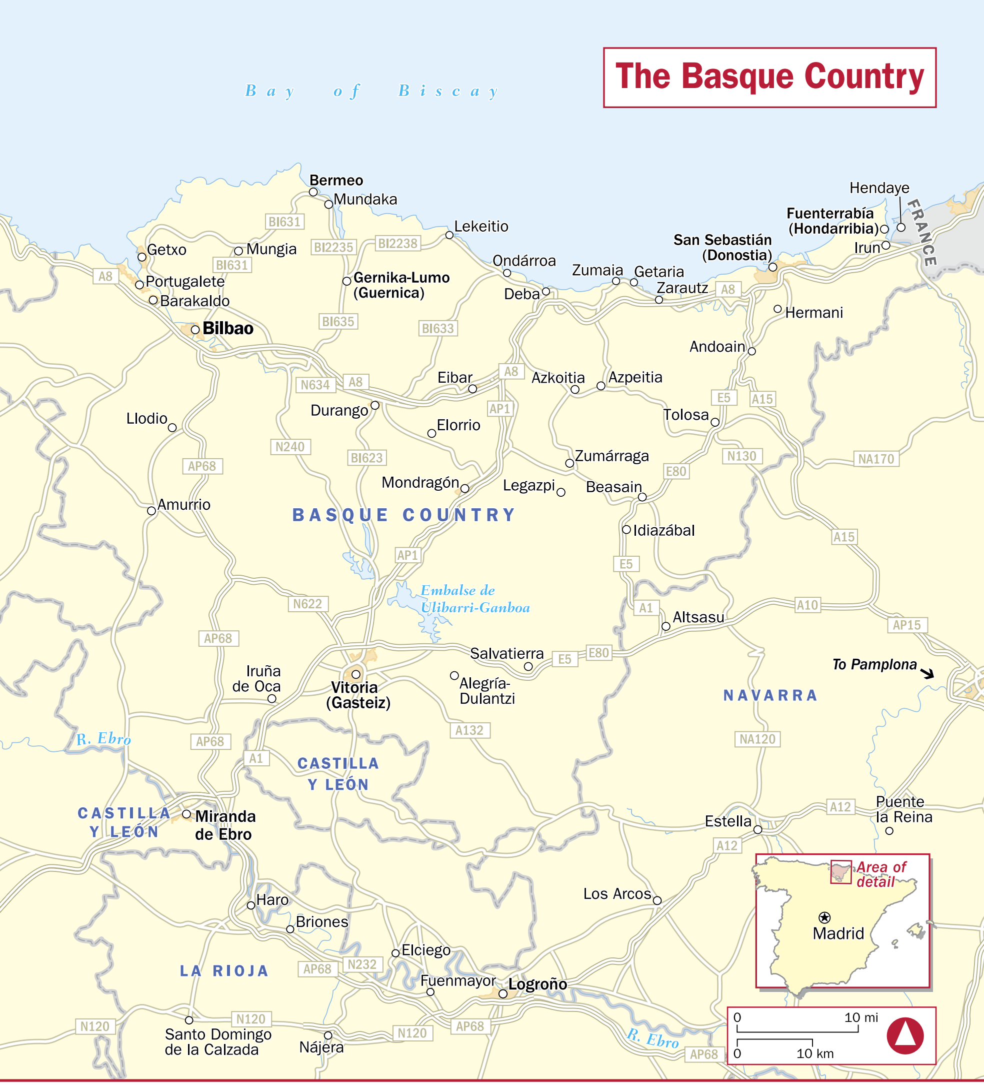
THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

- **Getting lost in Serra's labyrinth in the Guggenheim Bilbao:** In a museum where exhibitions are temporary and even much of the art is ephemeral, Richard Serra's *The Matter of Time* is, ironically, permanent. Wandering its mysterious steel walls is truly getting into the sculpture.
- **Going out for *pintxos* in San Sebastián:** Like most Basques, San Sebastiánós consider good food a natural part of their birthright. The most quotidian bars in town serve bargain-priced small tapas dishes inspired by the fine dining of the city's Michelin-starred restaurants.
- **Driving the headlands of the Basque Coast:** Rugged cliffs meet swirling sea along the Basque coastline between Bilbao and San Sebastián. The drive along the coastal road is one of the most scenic in Spain—and there's always a good place to stop for a meal.
- **Seeing the historic fishing life in Bermeo:** The Basques have always been some of Europe's top fishermen, whether it was catching cod and anchovies or hunting whales. The museum at Bermeo captures the romance, hardship, and triumph of the enterprise.
- **Hanging out by the pool at AlhóndigaBilbao:** The motto of the Alhóndiga is the old Latin "sound mind in sound body." The rooftop pool is just part of the complex that also includes exhibition galleries, lecture halls, the public library, a gym, and several bars and cafes.

VITORIA-GASTEIZ

66km (41 miles) S of Bilbao, 114km (71 miles) SW of San Sebastián, 351km (218 miles) N of Madrid

Quiet and sleepy until the early 1980s, Vitoria was chosen as headquarters of the Basque region's autonomous government. In honor of that occasion, it revived the Basque name Gasteiz, by which it was known when founded in 1181 by King Sancho of Navarra. The Castilian name Vitoria refers to a battle site revered by the English. On June 21, 1813, Wellington vanquished the occupying forces of Napoleon. A statue dedicated to the Iron Duke stands today on the neoclassical Plaza de la Virgen Blanca.


The Basque Country
Bay of Biscay
Bermeo
Mundaka
Lekeitio
Getxo
Mungia
Portugalete
Barakaldo
Bilbao
Gernika-Lumo (Guernica)
Ondárroa
Deba
Zumaia
Getaria
Zarautz
San Sebastián (Donostia)
Fuenterrabía (Hondarribia)
Hendaye
Irun
FRANCE
Hermani
Andoain
Eibar
Durango
Elorrio
Azkoitia
Azpeitia
Tolosa
Llodio
Zumárraga
Mondragón
Legazpi
Beasain
Amurrio
BASQUE COUNTRY
Idiazábal
Embalse de Ulibarri-Ganboa
Altsasu
Salvatierra
Alegría-Dulantzi
Iruña de Oca
Vitoria (Gasteiz)
To Pamplona
NAVARRA
R. Ebro
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
Miranda de Ebro
Estella
Puente la Reina
Los Arcos
Haro
Briones
Elciego
LA RIOJA
Fuenmayor
Logroño
Santo Domingo de la Calzada
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Area of detail
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BI631
BI2235
BI2238
A8
BI635
BI633
N634
AP1
N240
BI623
AP68
E80
N130
NA170
E5
A15
A1
N622
A10
AP15
A132
NA120
A12
N232
N120
AP68

Vitoria-Gasteiz represents the mountainous inland segment of the Basque lands during their most formative years as part of the kingdom known variously as Navarra or Pamplona. Shortly after its founding at the end of the 12th century, the city became a rich center for the wool and iron trades, and this wealth paid for the fine churches and palaces in the medieval quarter. Local university students keep the taverns rowdy until the wee hours.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The **Aeropuerto Vitoria-Foronda** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04;**) is 8km (5 miles) northwest of the town center and has direct air links to Madrid on **Iberia Airlines** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**).

The medieval district of Vitoria.

From San Sebastián, eight **RENFE trains** (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) daily make the 1¾-hour trip to Vitoria.

Roughly eight **buses** daily make the 1½-hour trip from San Sebastián. Eight to 12 buses daily make the 1-hour trip from Bilbao. Call ✆ **94-525-84-00** for more information and schedules.

Take the E-5 north from Madrid to Burgos, cutting northwest until you see the turnoff for Vitoria-Gasteiz. (Along its more northerly stretches, this superhighway is identified as both E-5 and A-1.)

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza General Loma 1 (www.vitoria-gasteiz.org/turismo; ✆ **94-516-15-98**), is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm and Sunday 11am to 2pm. From July to September, hours are daily 9:30am to 7:30pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS One of the major jazz festivals in the north of Spain takes place here annually in mid-July. It's the weeklong **Festival de Jazz de Vitoria-Gasteiz** (www.jazzvitoria.com; ✆ **94-514-19-19**). For the big-name performers, tickets range from 15€ to 40€. Spontaneous entertainment takes place on the street for free.

Exploring Vitoria

The most significant part of Vitoria-Gasteiz is the **medieval district ★**, whose Gothic buildings were constructed on a series of steps and terraces. Most of the streets, arranged in concentric ovals, are named after medieval artisan guilds. The northern end is marked by the Catedral de Santa María, its southern flank by the Iglesia de San Miguel. One of the most intriguing streets in the barrio is **Calle Cuchillaría,** which contains many medieval buildings. You can enter the courtyard at no. 24, **Casa del Cordón,** which was constructed in different stages from the 13th to the 16th centuries.

Artium ★ ART MUSEUM This stunning contemporary museum building is a perfect match for the contemporary Basque and Spanish art inside. The 2,000 pieces in the collection embrace all media, including video and installation art. The big names of Spanish 20th-century art—Picasso, Dalí, Miró—are here, but the museum also spotlights lesser known artists. Two signature works are in the lobby: a 1972 ceramic wall mural by Miró, and a 2001 glass sculpture by Javier Pérez that appears to be floating in air but is actually suspended from the ceiling.

Calle Francia 24. www.artium.org. ✆ **94-520-90-00.** Admission 6€ adults, "you decide" for students, seniors, and children. Tues–Thurs 11am–2pm and 5–8pm; Fri–Sun 11am–2pm and 4–9pm.

Catedral de Santa María CATHEDRAL The "old" cathedral was built in the 14th century in the Gothic style. It contains a good art collection, with paintings that imitate various schools, including those of Van Dyck, Caravaggio, and Rubens, as well as several tombs carved in a highly decorated Plateresque style. The cathedral is closed for general visits and for casual worship as the entire building is undergoing restorations expected to last until at least 2015. You can, however, call the number below or write to **visitas@catedralvitoria.com** and ask to be included in a group visit. Groups can be spontaneously formed if enough people are interested. For more details, contact the tourist office (see above).

Calle Fray Zacaras s/n. www.catedralvitoria.com. ✆ **94-525-51-35.** Admission 8€ adults, 4.50€ students and seniors. Tours daily 11am–1pm and 5–7pm by appointment only.

Catedral María Inmaculada CATHEDRAL Just north of the Jardines de la Florida, this enormous 20th-century church is known as the "new cathedral" of Vitoria and could easily be skipped were it not for the on-site **Museo Diocesano de Arte Sagrado** (✆ **94-525-06-31**), a small but choice collection of ecclesiastical paintings gathered from various churches, including a minor work by El Greco.

Calle Monseñor, Cadena y Eleta s/n ✆ **94-518-19-18.** Free admission. Cathedral Mon–Sat 11am–2pm. Museum Tues–Fri 10am–2pm and 4:30–6:30pm; Sat 10am–2pm; Sun 11am–2pm.

Museo Bibat/Fournier de Naipes MUSEUM This striking new complex weds a Renaissance mansion with an avant-garde museum structure designed by Basque architect Patxi Mangado. The mansion houses the Fournier family collection of playing cards from the 15th century to present, while the new portion houses the Álava provincial archaeological museum, which holds about 1,500 artifacts covering the region from prehistory to the Middle Ages. Some of the oldest examples date from the Celtic-Iberian period, while others show the strong Roman presence in the Basque interior.

Calle Cuchillería 54. www.vitoria-gasteiz.org. ✆ **94-520-37-07.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 10am–2pm and 4–6:30pm; Sat 10am–2pm; Sun 11am–2pm.

Museo de Bellas Artes de Álava ART MUSEUM The principal holdings of this provincial fine arts museum are in Spanish art from the 18th and 19th centuries, and Basque art between 1850 and 1950. But there is a scattering of fine older works, including a Crucifixion and portraits of saints Peter and Paul by José Ribera, and a triptych by the Master of Avila.

Palacio de Agusrí, Paseo de Fray Francisco 8. ✆ **94-518-19-18.** Free admission. Tues–Fri 10am–2pm and 4–6:30pm; Sat 10am–2pm; Sun 11am–2pm.

Plaza de la Virgen Blanca SQUARE A short walk south of the medieval quarter, this square is named for the late Gothic polychrome statue of the Virgen Blanca (the town's patron), which adorns the portico of the 13th-century Church of San Miguel at the square's upper edge. The church is open Monday through

Friday from 11am to 3pm. The square's neoclassical balconies overlook a statue of Wellington. A short walk away at Plaza de España (also known as Plaza Nueva), the student population of Vitoria congregates at the surrounding bars.

Where to Eat

The local Basque pub-crawl of going from tiny bar to tiny bar drinking small glasses of beer or wine is known as a *chiqueteo* because both bars and glasses are small, or *chico*. You can enjoy *pintxos* (Basque tapas) along the way. A number of popular spots line **Avenida de Gasteiz.**

El Portalón ★ BASQUE This restaurant was built in the late 1400s as a coach house tavern and post office. It sits right behind the old cathedral. Rich with a sense of history, its menu is a virtual living museum of traditional Basque cuisine: cod in *pil-pil* sauce, lamb's feet in red-pepper sauce, partridge, lentil salad, and spit-roasted meats. The restaurant takes pride in serving extremely fresh fish from the nearby Gulf of Biscay.

Correría 149. www.restauranteelportalon.com. ✆ **94-514-27-55.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11pm; Sun 1:30–3:30pm. Closed last 3 weeks of Aug and first week of Sept.

Mesa 🏷 BASQUE It's hard to beat this home-cooking restaurant for price or value. You can try a number of Basque specialties, including the firm-flesh *merluza* (hake) so beloved by Basque chefs. Fresh fish and a well-chosen selection of meats are presented nightly, and the service is attentive. Stewed oxtail is a good choice in cold weather, while the scrambled eggs with garlic shrimp is a tasty treat in spring and summer. The setting is solid, sober, and severely dignified, with white walls and wood trim.

Chile 1. ✆ **94-522-84-94.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 8€–24€; fixed-price menus 21€–35€. AE, MC, V. Thurs–Tues 1–3pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed last 2 weeks of Aug and first week of Sept.

Where to Stay

Achuri 🏷 This modern budget hotel is a short walk from the train station. It offers tidy and comfortably furnished but small guest rooms and well-equipped bathrooms. Breakfast is the only meal served (and is not included in the room rates), but there are several places serving food nearby.

Rioja 11, 01005 Vitoria. ✆ **94-525-58-00.** Fax 94-526-40-74. 40 units. 50€ double; 60€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV.

Barceló Gasteiz On the eastern flank of the broad, tree-lined boulevard that circumnavigates Old Town, this is the most modern hotel around. Built in 1982, it is renovated every few years. Although not architecturally distinctive, it offers good-size, conservative rooms with uncomplicated furnishings. It's a perfect base for exploring the medieval center.

Av. Gasteiz 45, 01008 Vitoria. www.barcelogasteiz.com. ✆ **94-522-81-00.** Fax 94-522-62-58. 150 units. 51€–65€ double; 75€–105€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Dato 🎁 Located 3 blocks south of the southern extremity of the Old Town, in the pedestrian zone, this hotel is an excellent budget option. It's known for its original regional decor, making the hotel a virtual small museum. The rooms, ranging from small to midsize, are well decorated, often with quite a bit of style. No breakfast is served.

Calle Eduardo Dato 28, 01005 Vitoria. www.hoteldato.com. ✆ **94-514-72-30.** Fax 94-523-23-20. 14 units. 46€–58€ double; 62€–68€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel General Álava Named after a local Spanish general who won an important battle against the French in 1815, this hotel is comfortable and welcoming. Guest rooms range from small to midsize, each fitted with a small tiled bathroom with a shower stall. The hotel mainly draws a business clientele, but is a good buy for leisure travelers on weekends. It is a 10-minute walk west of the town center, near the junction of Calle Chile.

Gasteiz 79, 01009 Vitoria. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **94-521-50-00.** Fax 94-524-83-95. 113 units. 45€–89€ double; 65€–112€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (10€ per 24 hr.).

SAN SEBASTIÁN-DONASTIA ★★★

21km (13 miles) W of the French border, 483km (300 miles) N of Madrid, 100km (62 miles) E of Bilbao

Locals will tell you, "Before God was God and rocks were rocks, the Basques were Basques." San Sebastián (Donastia in Basque) is still a bastion of Basque culture and identity—as well as a resort on par with Nice and Monte Carlo, thanks to flowering gardens, summer festivals, seafront promenades, the best restaurants in Spain, sandy beaches, green mountains, and a scenic, boat-filled Bay of Biscay. Experience the laid-back Basque-style *joie de vivre* as you explore its tapas bars, sands, and mountain funicular rides ascending to the heavens.

Things to Do Both locals and scantily clad international visitors can be found on shell-shaped **Playa de la Concha ★★**, opening onto the half-moon **Bay of Biscay.** Popular since the mid–19th century, it's one of the finest urban beaches in Atlantic Europe. When you tire of the sands, take the funicular to the panoramic **Monte Igeldo.**

Relaxation When not beaching it, you can hike the surrounding mountains, wander the narrow streets of **La Parte Vieja (Old Town),** and enjoy a picnic in the **Jardines de Alderdi Eder.** Cap your day with an early evening *paseo* (stroll) along **Playa de la Concha.**

Restaurants & Dining We once asked famed Spanish chefs Ferran Adrià and José Andrés where they would go for a gastronomic holiday in Spain. Both answered "¡San Sebastián!" The city's chefs are the most acclaimed in Spain. Gourmets devour local specialties such as baby eels in garlic or hake cheeks in green sauce. The local *pintxos* are all the rage from London to Los Angeles.

Nightlife & Entertainment In summer, **Semana Grande** envelops the entire city in parades, concerts, fireworks, and music. The **International Film Festival** in late September attracts American and European movie stars. Otherwise, the mellow old taverns of **La Parte Vieja** fill up every night, with revelers downing pints of beer, glasses of *txakolí* (the bracing local white wine), and enjoying *pintxos creativos.*

One of San Sebastián's city beaches.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Iberia Airlines** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) offers three to six daily flights to San Sebastián from Madrid, plus three daily flights from Barcelona. The domestic airport is at nearby Fuenterrabía. From Fuenterrabía, buses run to the center of San Sebastián every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday from 6:45am to 9:05pm, and Sunday every 30 minutes from 7:40am to 9:05pm. Tickets are 5€. Contact **Ekialdebus** (www.interbus.com.es; ✆ **94-364-13-02**) for more information.

From Madrid, **RENFE** runs **trains** to the French border at Irún, two of which stop in San Sebastián (a 5¼-hr. trip). RENFE also provides two trains daily from Barcelona to San Sebastián (6 hr.). For RENFE information, log on to www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

San Sebastián is well linked by a **bus** network to many of Spain's major cities, although it's more convenient to take a train from Madrid. **Continental Auto,** Av. de Sancho el Sabio 31 (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), runs seven to nine daily buses from Madrid, taking 6 hours and costing 32€. **Vibasa,** Paseo De Vizcaya 16 (www.vibasa.es; ✆ **94-345-75-00**), operates three buses from Barcelona, a 7-hour trip costing 30€ one-way. Finally, **Transportes PESA,** Av. de Sancho el Sabio 33 (www.pesa.net; ✆ **90-210-12-10**), runs buses from Bilbao every 30 minutes during the day, taking 1¼ hours and costing 16€ one-way.

Driving from Madrid, take the N-I toll road north to Burgos, and then follow A-1 to Miranda de Ebro. From here, continue on the A-68 north to Bilbao and then the A-8 east to San Sebastián. From Pamplona, take the A-15 north to the N-I route, which leads right into San Sebastián.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Boulevard 8 (www.sansebastianturismo.com; ✆ **94-348-11-66**). It's open year-round Monday to Thursday 9am to 1:30pm and 3:30 to 7pm, Friday and Saturday 10am to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS In mid-August, San Sebastián stages its annual party, **Aste Nagusia,** a celebration of traditional Basque music and dance, along with fireworks, cooking competitions, and sports events. In mid-September, the San Sebastián **International Film Festival** draws luminaries from America and Europe. The dates of these festivals vary from year to year, so check with the tourist office (see above). In the second half of July, San Sebastián hosts a jazz festival, **Jazzaldia.**

Exploring San Sebastián

San Sebastián means beach time, excellent Basque food, and strolling along the **Paseo de la Concha.** The monuments, such as they are, can easily be viewed before lunch, though the main museum and the aquarium might hold your attention a little longer.

Museo de Sociedad Vasca y Ciudadanía ★, Plaza Zuloaga 1 (www.santelmomuseoa.com; ✆ **94-348-15-80**), completed a multiyear reconstruction in 2012 that resulted in an aluminum facade around the ancient walls of the San Telmo monastery. Expanding beyond the original walls, the new museum has several galleries with state-of-the-art exhibitions as well as a theater, library, and cafe. The collections include an impressive array of Basque artifacts from prehistoric times as well as works by Zuloaga, Golden Age artists such as El Greco and Ribera, and a large number of Basque painters. Located in the Old Town at the base of Monte Urgull, the museum is open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 8pm. Admission is 5€ adults, 3€ students and seniors.

The wide promenade **Paseo Nuevo** almost encircles Monte Urgull, one of the two mountains between which San Sebastián is nestled. (Monte Igeldo is the other one.) The *paseo* comes to an end at **Palacio del Mar** ★, Plaza Carlos, Blasco de Imaz s/n (www.aquariumss.com; ✆ **94-344-00-99**), an oceanographic museum/aquarium with a mesmerizing collection of huge tanks containing myriad marine species. A transparent underwater walkway allows a 360-degree view of sharks, rays, and other fish as they swim around you. A maritime museum upstairs presents a fascinating synopsis of humankind's precarious relationship with the sea through the ages, with historical displays of fishing gear, naval artifacts, and marine fossils. Here you can also see the skeleton of the next-to-last whale caught in the Bay of Biscay, in 1878. The museum is open October through March Monday to Friday 10am to 7pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 8pm;

The underwater walkway of the Palacio del Mar.

Speaking Basque in Steel & Stone

Eduardo Chillida Juantegui (1924–2002) was the greatest Basque sculptor of the 20th century, known mainly for his monumental abstract works in steel and stone. Born in San Sebastián, he returned to the city in 1959 and worked at his beautifully sited studio in the hills outside town in the village of Hernani. On his death, the studio became the Museo Chillida-Leku, but closed abruptly in 2011 when it lost its government subsidy. Fortunately, visitors to San Sebastián don't have to go far to see one of Chillida's signature works, the *Comb of the Wind* (pictured). It rises from the rocks at the base of Monte Igeldo, where it meets the sea at the west end of Playa de la Concha. Like his best works, it combines an abstract beauty of form with an analytical precision that makes the viewer contemplate both the object and the space it inhabits. Viewed from one direction, the *Comb of the Wind* resembles giant calipers, a tool associated with Basque mariners and their legendary charts.

April through June and September Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 9pm; and Easter week and July through August daily 10am to 10pm. Admission is 12€ adults, 8€ students, and free for children 4 and under.

Other sights include the **Palacio de Miramar** (✆ **94-321-90-22**), which stands on its own hill opening onto La Concha. Queen María Cristina, after whom the grandest hotel in town is named, opened this palace in 1893, but by the turbulent 1930s it had fallen into disrepair. The city council took it over in 1971. You can visit daily from 8am to 9pm for a look at the lawns and gardens (the palace is closed to visitors). The palace stands on land splitting the two major beaches of San Sebastián: Playa de la Concha and Playa de Ondarreta.

Palacio de Ayete was constructed by the duke of Bailéen in 1878 and was the summer home of King Alfonso XIII and Queen María Cristina until the Palacio de Miramar (see above) was completed. With 75,000 sq. m (807,300 sq. ft.) of parkland, the palace served as the summer home of Franco from 1940 until 1975. The residence remains closed to the public, but you can wander the beautiful grounds daily in summer from 8am to 9pm, and in the off season from 8am to 7pm. Take bus no. 19 from Plaza de Guipúzcoa.

For the best view of the city, ride the funicular to the top of **Monte Igeldo** ★ (www.monteigeldo.es; ✆ **94-321-02-11**), where you can take in a panoramic view of the bay and the Cantabrian coastline. From July to October, the funicular runs Monday to Friday 10am to 9pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 10pm. From April to June, it runs Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 9pm. Round-trip fare is 2.80€ adults, and 2.10€ children 7 and under. It's also possible to drive up or even to walk, if you don't mind a fairly steep climb without sidewalks. In spring, the air is rich with the scent of honeysuckle.

Where to Eat

The number of gastronomic pilgrims to San Sebastián may well equal the 140,000 who walk the Ruta de Santiago annually in a religious pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (p. 672). At this writing, Spain has only five Michelin-three-star restaurants—and three of them are in San Sebastián. That culinary expertise even trickles down to the modest bars, where you can feast on *pintxos* for a pittance.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Akelaŕe ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE Opened in 1974 on the western edge of San Sebastián, Akelaŕe became a must for serious foodies when owner/chef Pedro Subijana won the 1983 National Prize for Gastronomy as the best chef in Spain. His preparations, inspired by Basque *caserios* (farmsteads), have influenced a generation of chefs and helped define the entire philosophy of *la nueva cocina vasca* (modern Basque cuisine). The perfect beginning to any meal is puff pastry filled with anchovy filets, accompanied by a glass of chilled fino sherry. Traditional dishes might include fish cooked on a griddle with garlic and parsley; beans with bacon, chorizo, and pork ribs; baked rice with clams; or a special *marmitako* (fisherman's stew). Fresh market ingredients and regional recipes inspire such dishes as sautéed duck liver, fish and shellfish soup, lobster salad flavored with cider vinegar, and roast suckling pig. The name of the restaurant, incidentally, translates from the Basque as "Witches' Sabbath."

Paseo del Padre Orkolaga 56. www.akelarre.net. ✆ **94-331-12-09.** Reservations required. Main courses 26€–75€; tasting menu 145€. AE, DC, MC, V. Jan–June Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1–3:30pm; July–Dec Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Closed Feb and Sept 27–Oct 15.

Arzak ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE One of the most famous dining rooms in the world is the modernized family restaurant of the Arzak clan. Juan Marí Arzak grew up in the trade here and raised his daughter Elena as his co-chef and eventual successor. Juan Marí and Pedro Subijana are generally credited with revolutionizing Basque cooking in the 1970s when they were inspired by French nouvelle cuisine. The Arzaks continue to combine staples of the Basque culinary legacy with many new creations. Most diners opt for the *dégustación* menu, but if you're ordering a la carte, begin with a selection of fresh oysters or natural foie gras. Crayfish is regularly featured as an appetizer, as is the *sopa de pescado* (fish soup). For a main course, consider *merluza* (hake) in vinaigrette with onions and small squid. The back of the menu lists classic dishes that have won the most praise among visitors—everything from stuffed sweet peppers with fish mousse to pheasant to partridge. The restaurant is on the main road leading from the center of town to the French border.

Av. Alcade Elosegui 273. www.arzak.info. ✆ **94-328-55-93.** Reservations required. Main courses 48€–72€; tasting menu 175€, excluding drinks. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed June 13–30 and Nov 5–Dec 1.

Martín Berasategui ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE Trained by his mother, who cooked for local fishermen, Berasategui opened his restaurant on the outskirts of town. His cuisine is subtle and pure. The hors d'oeuvres are among the best in the region—from a curl of cider-marinated mackerel with fried anchovies in olive oil to morsels of rare tuna belly grilled over wood charcoal. Starters include a rich lobster soup with goose barnacles. Other imaginative dishes: scallops and a sea urchin custard with soy sprouts, coffee cream, cinnamon, and curry; and roast Dover sole with clam oil, citrus flavors, black mint, and a dry tangerine and nut powder. Other selections include oysters with watercress, arugula, and green apple dressed in lemon grass and served with fennel cream or *mille-feuille* of smoked eel, foie gras, and spring onions.

Loidi Kalea 4, Lasarte. www.martinberasategui.com. ✆ **94-336-64-71.** Reservations required. Main courses 32€–50€; *menu degustación* 175€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Closed Dec 15–Jan 17.

MODERATE

Bodegón Alejandro 🎁 BASQUE This bodega-style restaurant focuses exclusively on a fixed-price menu that changes virtually every day. Many of the ingredients come from the nearby marketplace, reflecting the seasonality and bounty of the Basque Country. Dishes are based on old recipes which have been adapted to modern palates. Specialties might include a stewed and glazed veal tail served with a potato-and-bacon terrine along with roasted pepper *jus,* or roasted lamb with butternut pumpkin cream and sheep's-milk foam. Pastries and cakes are highly caloric but eminently satisfying.

Calle Fermín Calbetón 4. www.bodegonalejandro.com. ✆ **94-342-71-58.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 15€–22€; fixed-price menu 39€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–10:30pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Closed Dec 23–Jan 15.

Juanito Kojua ★ BASQUE/SEAFOOD This little seafood restaurant in the Old Town has no decor to speak of, but it's famous all over Spain. The fish served here is sparkling fresh and well prepared, as evoked by such dishes as sole grilled in butter and served with a lemon sauce, as well as tasty *ami* (skipjack) with sautéed potatoes. The chef also has a penchant for well-seasoned meat dishes, including a succulent grilled veal chop served with a garden-fresh green salad.

Puerto 14. www.juanitokojua.com. ✆ **94-342-01-80.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–35€; fixed-price menus 31€–52€. AE, MC, V. Tues 1–3:30pm; Wed–Sun 1–3:30pm and 8–11pm. Closed 3 weeks in Feb and 2 weeks in June.

Ni Neu ★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE In the sparkling Kursaal Palacio de Congresos, between Playa de Zurriola and the Río Urumea, this establishment has dining on two levels, with the main restaurant on the upper floor and the gastropub with several fixed-price menus on the ground level. No longer under the direction of Martín Berasategui (who called it MB Kursaal), the cuisine remains cutting edge but less precious and more affordable. Some of the latest specialties, based on market-fresh ingredients, feature cod confit on crushed potatoes with red-pepper *jus,* potato salad with large prawns and garlic cream, and roasted hake with warm citrus and a pistachio vinaigrette.

Zurriola Pasealekua 1, Gros. www.restaurantenineu.com. ✆ **94-300-31-62.** Reservations suggested. Fixed-price menus 18€–36€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–3.30pm and 8:30–10:30pm.

Rekondo 🎁 BASQUE This is one of the most substantial restaurants in town, in an antique stone house on the slopes of Monte Igeldo. As befits a classic Basque *asador,* or roast meat restaurant, the house specialties include grilled chops and steaks, preparations of hake and flounder, and spicy garlic-laced versions of squid. The roasted spider crab is an extraordinary dish—a fish casserole as hearty as any beef dish. The remarkable wine is heavily slanted toward big reds from La Rioja and trophy wines from Bordeaux. Prices are surprisingly reasonable for the quantity and quality of the food and the fact that Rekondo is hailed all over Spain as the model Basque *asador.*

Paseo Igeldo 57. www.rekondo.com. ✆ **94-321-29-07.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 18€–34€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues 1–3:30pm; Thurs–Mon 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed 2 weeks in June and 3 weeks in Nov.

Urepel ★★ BASQUE/INTERNATIONAL Urepel is near the mouth of the Río Urumea at the edge of the Old Town. Its interior isn't as elegant as those of the restaurants above, but fans come for the food. The original chef-owner Tomás Almandoz opened Urepel in 1974; now his son Peru Almandoz extends the legacy by introducing some of the tricks of molecular cuisine. (Try his low-temperature boiled egg with savory bread crumbs and onion toffee.) Deftly handled seafood is often served with delicate sauces. The main courses are enhanced by an emphasis on perfectly prepared vegetables. *Rape, dorada* (gilthead sea bream), and raviolis of *cigalas* (crayfish) are likely to turn up on the menu. You can also order goose or duck, somewhat uncommon in San Sebastián. Pastries are a sight to behold. Evening dinner is often more fun, as many of the tables are reserved by local businesspeople and government officials for the midday meal. Urepel can accommodate vegetarian and celiac diners; let the management know when you make your reservation.

Paseo de Salamanca 3. www.urepel.net. ✆ **94-342-40-40.** Reservations required. Main courses 22€–36€; tasting menu 50€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm. Closed Easter week, July 1–23, and Dec 24–Jan 6.

INEXPENSIVE

Casa Vallés 🏷 BASQUE Established in 1942 on an all-pedestrian street near the cathedral, this restaurant has survived government coups, civil wars, and the ongoing blur of locals who come in for daily sustenance. You'll find a bustling tapas bar on the ground floor (see below). There's a simple but dignified-looking paneled dining area upstairs. Menu items include lots of fresh fish, as well as succulent veal, steak, pork, and chicken that you can have grilled over charcoal. Hake, sole, and filet of eel are among the most popular fish, but because the menu is huge and includes seasonal specials, most tastes are abundantly satisfied.

Reyes Católicos 10. www.barvalles.com. ✆ **94-345-22-10.** Main courses 7€–21€; fixed-price menu 23€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues 1–3pm; Thurs–Mon 1–3pm and 8:30–11pm. Bar daily 8:30am–11pm. Closed 2 weeks in late May.

PINTXO BARS

It would be impossible to highlight every great *pintxo* (tapas) bar in San Sebastián, and the resulting list would resemble the phone book. Groups of *pintxos* enthusiasts often spend their evenings on some 20 streets in the Old Town, each leading toward Monte Urgull, the port, or La Bretxa marketplace. **Alameda del Bulevar** is the most upscale of these streets, and **Calle Fermín Calvetón** is one of the most popular. We like **Calle 31 de Agosto** and the side streets and back alleys that radiate from it.

The following spots offer some suggestions for beginning your explorations. Their hours vacillate with the seasons, but most are open from around noon to midafternoon and then again from early evening until midnight. We have noted the days that they are closed because they rarely vary. Most *pintxos* mentioned run from 2€ to 5€. Wine, cider, or beer is typically another 2€ per serving.

A Fuego Negro ★★ *PINTXOS CREATIVOS* With its sleek black-and-red decor, witty menu, and hipster vibe, there's no mistaking the avant-garde aspirations of this outstanding *pintxos* bar. Order a cold tomato soup, and the waitress will produce a small pitcher to flood a bowl of Iberian ham, fried bread crumbs, mushrooms, and fried eggs with the sanguine liquid. And who could resist the simple genius of a miniature Kobe beef burger on a ketchup-flavored bun?

Calle 31 de Agosto 31. www.afuegonegro.com. ✆ **65-013-53-73.** Closed Mon.

Aloña-Berri BASQUE *PINTXOS* Feast on such delights as silky salt-cod *brandade,* pigeon in pastry, or anchovies in red-pepper cream.

Calle Bermінghan 24. www.alonaberri.com. ✆ **94-329-08-18.** Closed Sun evening and all day Mon.

Bar La Cepa BASQUE *PINTXOS* Located on the northern edge of the Old Town, La Cepa is immensely popular with beer drinkers. Try the grilled squid or the omelet of salt cod and green pepper.

31 de Agosto 7–9. www.barlacepa.com. ✆ **94-342-63-94.** Closed Tues.

Bar-Restaurante La Viña BASQUE *PINTXOS* One of our favorites of the traditional *pintxos* bars, the kitchen here churns out ham and mushroom croquettes and small dishes of chorizo sausage braised in apple cider. Wine is a specialty, but La Viña also serves hard cider, aerating it properly by pouring from a bottle held high above the glass.

Calle 31 de Agosto 3. ✆ **94-342-74-95.** Closed Mon.

Bergara Bar ★★ *PINTXOS CREATIVOS* Located in the Gros district a few blocks from the Kursaal, Bergara is considered by many gastronomes to be the Platonic ideal of a tapas bar. It offers an immense spread of inventive dishes, like an anchovy "false lasagna." Squeeze your way to the bar and order by pointing.

Calle General Artetze 8. ✆ **94-327-50-26.** Closed Sun.

Casa Alcalde BASQUE *PINTXOS* Just a 5-minute walk from Parque Alderdi Eder, Alcalde lays out terrific traditional servings of shellfish plates and thinly sliced *jamón serrano,* and Idiazabel cheese. You can also order full meals in a small restaurant at the back.

Calle Mayor 19. ✆ **94-342-62-16.** Daily.

Ganbara Bar-Asador BASQUE *PINTXOS* The restaurant in back is devoted to roasted meats, but the bar out front tends to feature some terrific dishes made with spider crab, including a grilled crab pie called *tartaleta de chagurro.* The house is plugged into the local network of foragers for wild mushrooms, so sautéed mushrooms are a specialty. They can be pricier than caviar, so ask before ordering.

Calle San Jerónimo 21. www.ganbarajatetxea.com. ✆ **94-342-25-75.** Closed Sun evening and all day Mon.

La Cuchara de San Telmo ★ *PINTXOS CREATIVOS* While La Cuchara resembles a traditional tavern with a long wooden bar and an open kitchen, its chefs have avant-garde aspirations. The house signature dish is a beautifully presented lobe of foie gras glazed with an apple compote.

Calle 31 de Agosto 28. ✆ **64-778-74-44.** Closed Mon.

Restaurante Bernardo Etxea BASQUE *PINTXOS* Seafood is especially good here. Try the crab salad and the grilled squid dusted with smoky paprika. The kitchen also makes a nice plate of fried *guindilla* peppers.

Calle Puerto 7. www.bernardoetxea.com. ✆ **94-342-20-55.** Closed Wed evening and all day Thurs.

Restaurante Gandarias BASQUE *PINTXOS* When your taste buds start asking "Where's the beef?" it's time for Gandarias, where you can get some of the beefiest beef you've ever tasted as a *pintxo* of grilled sirloin and green peppers on rounds of French bread.

Calle 31 de Agosto 23. www.restaurantegandarias.com. ✆ **94-342-63-62.** Daily.

Shopping

One of the best outlets for Basque handicrafts and accessories is **Txapela,** Calle Puerto 8 (✆ **94-342-02-43**), which sells the rough cotton shirts for which the Basques are famous. If you're looking for a *boína* (beret) or any other form of headgear, visit **Ponsol,** Calle Narrica 4 (✆ **94-342-08-76**), San Sebastián's oldest hat manufacturer. For virtually anything else, try the length of the most congested shopping district, **La Parte Vieja,** where merchants hawk everything from T-shirts to cameras to film.

Entertainment & Nightlife

The best evening entertainment is to go **tapas tasting** (p. 607) in the Old Quarter. In San Sebastián it's called an *ir-de-pintxos-y-poteo,* which translates roughly as "going out for snacks and drinks."

San Sebastián has other nightlife possibilities. If disco isn't too retro for you, head for **La Kabutzia,** Muelle (www.lakabutzia.com; ✆ **94-342-97-85**), where the cover and one drink cost 15€. The club opens at 8pm, with variable closing times, depending on business.

San Sebastián's only venue for gambling is the **Casino Kursaal,** Mayor 1 (www.casinokursaal.com; ✆ **94-342-92-14**). The casino requires minimum bets of 1€ to 50€ for the roulette tables. For the blackjack tables, it requires 5€, or 2.50€ on Sunday. Entrance costs 4€ per person after 10:30pm and requires an ID card with photo or a passport. Jackets and ties for men are not required. The casino is open daily from 5pm to 5am.

The big cultural center is **Centro Kursaal,** Av. de Zurriola 1 (www.kursaal.org; ✆ **94-300-30-00**), an avant-garde building designed by Rafael Moneo and positioned on the Baie de la Concha. A cultural, sporting, and leisure center, it is the venue for almost any major event, including a "Basque Dixieland" band, a salsa band from Madrid, or gospel singers from America's South.

The Kursaal, along with the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, has helped put the Basque Country on the cultural map. Some tradition-minded locals find the modern architecture to be at odds with the city's essential Belle Epoque look, but it is really only the 20th-century equivalent of the city's late-19th-century style. All of San Sebastián's major festivals, including the September film festival, are staged here. There is a 1,800-seat theater for plays, music, dance, and *zarzuela* performances. You can also take a guided tour for 2€ (Fri–Sun at 1:30pm) or eat at the restaurant Ni Neu (p. 606).

Where to Stay

If you book in advance, you'll find good hotel values. In the high season, most hoteliers insist you take at least half-board (breakfast plus one meal).

VERY EXPENSIVE

Hotel María Cristina ★★★ This spectacular Belle Epoque hotel sits in the heart of town midway between the bay and Río Urumea. The Cristina opened in 1912 behind a facade of chiseled stone and ornate ironwork and underwent a top to bottom renovation in 2012. During San Sebastián's film festival, this is where you're likely to find movie stars, film directors, and other glitterati. The public rooms are opulent with ormolu, mahogany, onyx, exotic marbles, and rosewood marquetry. The spacious guest rooms are appropriately lavish, with luxury beds and baths and all the latest in unobtrusive high technology.

Paseo República Argentina 4, 20004 San Sebastián. www.hotel-mariacristina.com. ☎ **800/325-3589** in the U.S., or 94-343-76-00. Fax 94-343-76-76. 136 units. 180€–410€ double; 260€–720 suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 24€. Bus: 5 or 6. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (23€ per 24 hr.).

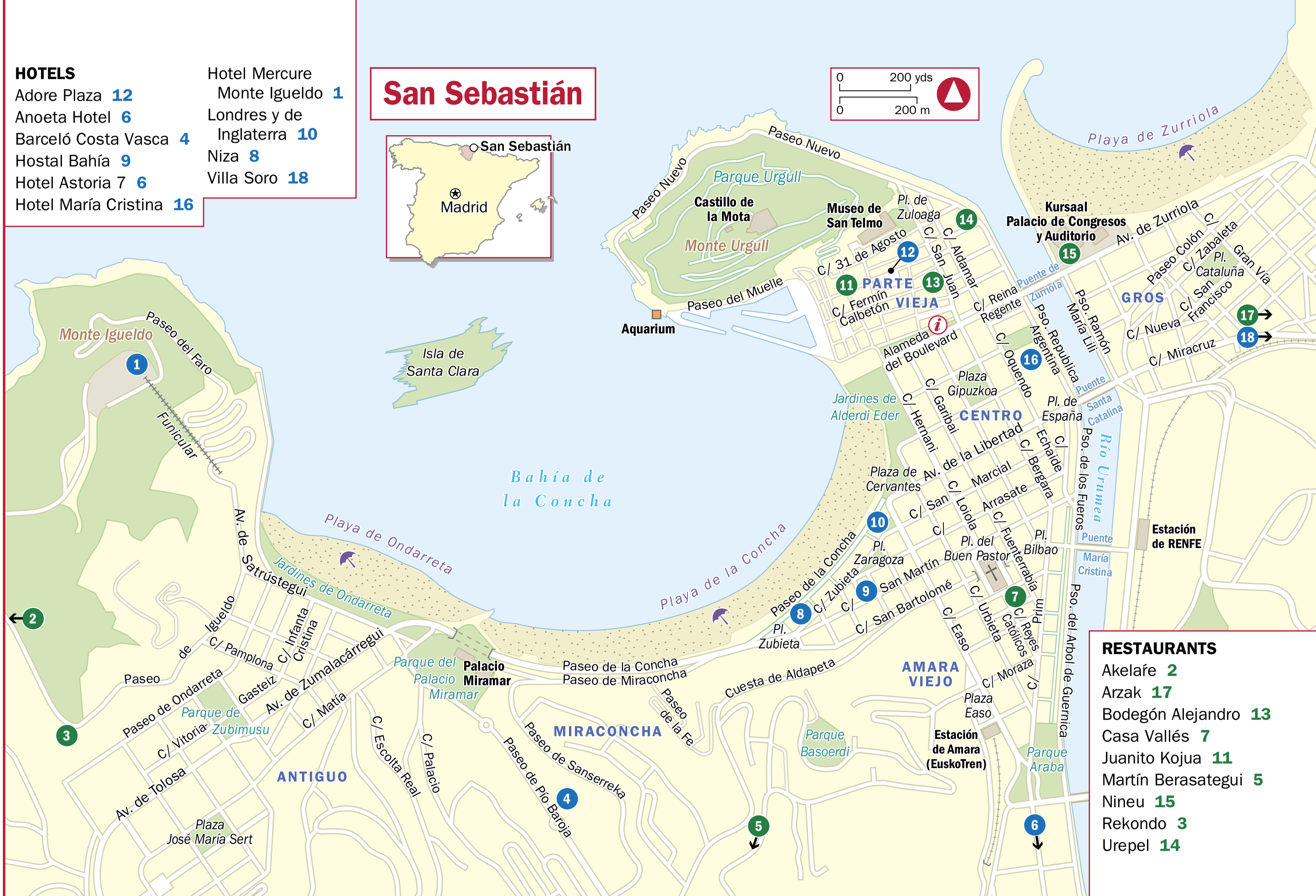
EXPENSIVE

Londres y de Inglaterra ★★ Beside the northern edge of Playa de la Concha, this 19th-century hotel is one of the most stylish in town. It's not as plush as the Maria Cristina but is more affordable and closer to the beach. The views from many of the balconies encompass the beach and some rocky offshore islands. The traditional-style public rooms contain deep armchairs and big windows. The hotel has good-size guest rooms with a vaguely English decor and modern bathrooms.

Zubieta 2, 20007 San Sebastián. www.hlondres.com. ☎ **94-344-07-70.** Fax 94-344-04-91. 148 units. 169€–254€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 23€. Bus: 5 or 6. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Villa Soro ★★ On the edge of the historic core, Villa Soro, a *fin de siècle* mansion, has been turned into a small hotel imbued with atmosphere, comfort, and charm. Much of its period architecture was retained in a major restoration, including its sweeping staircase and curved French doors. The hotel still has its original hardwood floors and is filled with many antiques. Bedrooms and bathrooms, however, are completely up-to-date with modern furnishings. Each unit is decorated with plush fabrics and rare woods, as well as paintings from local artists. The dining room lies in the former *serre,* or winter garden. If rooms in the original house are not available, the newly built additions are just as comfortable.

San Sebastián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Pl. de Zuloaga
Kursaal Palacio de Congresos y Auditorio
Av. de Zurriola
Paseo Colón
C/ Zabaleta
Pl. Cataluña
Gran Vía
C/ San Francisco
GROS
C/ Nueva
C/ Miracruz
Pso. Ramón María Lili
Puente de Zurriola
C/ Aldamar
C/ San Juan
C/ 31 de Agosto
PARTE VIEJA
C/ Fermín Calbetón
C/ Reina Regente
Pso. Republica Argentina
Alameda del Boulevard
Paseo del Muelle
Aquarium
Isla de Santa Clara
Plaza Gipuzkoa
C/ Oquendo
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C/ Hernani
C/ Garibai
CENTRO
Av. de la Libertad
C/ Echaide
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Río Urumea
Pso. de los Fueros
Estación de RENFE
Plaza de Cervantes
C/ San Marcial
C/ Loiola
C/ Arrasate
C/ Fuenterrabía
Pl. Bilbao
Puente María Cristina
Bahía de la Concha
Pl. Zaragoza
Pl. del Buen Pastor
C/ San Martín
C/ Prim
C/ Reyes Católicos
C/ Urbieta
C/ Zubieta
C/ San Bartolomé
C/ Easo
C/ Moraza
Pso. del Arbol de Guernica
Paseo de la Concha
Playa de la Concha
Pl. Zubieta
AMARA VIEJO
Plaza Easo
Estación de Amara (EuskoTren)
Parque Araba
Parque Basoerdi
Cuesta de Aldapeta
Paseo de Miraconcha
Paseo de la Fe
MIRACONCHA
Paseo de Sanserreka
Paseo de Pío Baroja
Palacio Miramar
Parque del Palacio Miramar
C/ Palacio
C/ Escolta Real
Playa de Ondarreta
Jardines de Ondarreta
Av. de Satrústegui
Monte Igueldo
Paseo del Faro
Funicular
Paseo de Igueldo
C/ Pamplona
C/ Infanta Cristina
Av. de Zumalacárregui
Gasteiz
C/ Matía
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Av. Ategorrieta 61, 20013 San Sebastián. www.villasoro.com. ✆ **94-329-79-70.** Fax 94-329-79-71. 25 units. 130€–325€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 5, 6, 7, or 17. **Amenities:** Bikes; concierge; exercise room; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

Anoeta Hotel Close to the sports arena and a 5-minute drive from the town center, Anoeta features cherrywood, marble fittings, and a modern decor behind its brick facade. With a welcoming atmosphere, it's one of the better choices in the midprice range. Guest rooms are generally small but quite inviting, with good beds and wooden furniture.

Paseo de Anoeta 30, 20014 San Sebastián. www.hotelanoeta.com. ✆ **94-345-14-99.** Fax 94-345-20-36. 26 units. 95€–120€ double; 115€–150€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 8€. Bus: 26 or 28. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Barceló Costa Vasca A large redbrick hotel, the Costa Vasca is 10 minutes from Ondarreta Beach, and a 5-minute drive (or 10 min. on foot) from the center of town. The interior of the hotel is modern and businesslike, with plenty of space for conferences and banquets; it's suitable for the leisure traveler, too, with somewhat better rates on weekends. The decor is tasteful and low-key. The rooms are a good size and comfortably furnished; many of the units have balconies.

Av. de Pío Baroja 15, 20008 San Sebastián. www.barcelo.com. ✆ **94-331-79-50.** Fax 94-321-24-28. 203 units. 70€–170€ double; 200€–350€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking outside free; garage 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Astoria 7 ★★ 🎁 We usually steer clear of bus station hotels, but this swanky film-buff haven across from the bus terminal is an exception. Set in a middle-class residential neighborhood full of shops and restaurants, the building was San Sebastián's first multiplex cinema, and the hotel takes the cinematic theme to the max. Each room is named for a film personality, and there are also a few ancient movie seats in the lobby, a small cinema in the basement, a fantastic cinema library of picture books, and a lending library of DVDs. It's a straight shot on the bus to the Kursaal complex, where most films of the San Sebastián Film Festival are screened. Rooms are spacious, modern, and even a little Hollywood glamorous.

Sagrada Familia 1, 20010 San Sebastián. www.astoria7hotel.com. ✆ **94-344-50-00.** Fax: 94-344-54-54. 102 units. 94€–165€ double; 110€–190€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking garage 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; room service; film library. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Mercure Monte Igueldo ★ This first-class hotel is perched like a castle on top of the mountain overlooking San Sebastián, a 10-minute drive from the center of town. The public rooms, guest rooms, and main terrace all boast panoramic coastal views. The streamlined, modern guest rooms have private balconies, and the furnishings are standardized but reasonably comfortable.

Paseo del Faro 134, Monte Igeldo, 20008 San Sebastián. www.mercure.com. ✆ **94-321-02-11.** Fax 94-321-50-28. 125 units. 77€–190€ double; 92€–210€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: Igeldo. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; children's center; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (5€ per 24 hr.).

Niza ★ 🎁 This little family-run hotel, opening onto the Playa de la Concha, offers real character, great location, and a friendly staff. The guest rooms are bright and airy, if rather basic, with wooden headboards, white walls, and wall-to-wall carpeting. For the same price as rooms with street views, 18 units open onto ocean views.

Zubieta 56, 20007 San Sebastián. www.hotelniza.com. ✆ **94-342-66-63.** Fax 94-344-12-51. 40 units. 128€–150€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 15€. Bus: 5 or 6. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C (in most units), TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Adore Plaza 🏷 This well-run and well-maintained establishment in the heart of the Old Town, next to La Concha and Zurriola beaches, is one of the resort's bargains. It offers handsomely decorated and comfortable guest rooms. Each hallway bathroom is shared by four guest rooms. The hotel has dormitory rooms as well as spacious double and triple rooms.

Plaza de la Constitución 6, 20003 San Sebastián. www.adoreplaza.com. ✆ **94-342-22-70.** 9 units. 40€–60€ double; 16€–25€ per person sharing dormitory room. MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 26 or 28. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Hostal Bahía 🏷 A good-value hotel a block from the beach, the Bahía features guest rooms of varying sizes: Some are large enough to contain sofas and armchairs; others fall into the cubicle category. Many North Americans stay here and take public transportation to Pamplona for the running of the bulls.

Calle San Martín 54B, 20007 San Sebastián. www.hostalbahia.com. ✆ **94-346-92-11.** Fax 94-346-39-14. 55 units. 50€–139€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 15€. Bus: 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9. **Amenities:** Bar; concierge. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

FUENTERRABÍA

23km (14 miles) E of San Sebastián, 510km (317 miles) N of Madrid, 18km (11 miles) W of St-Jean-de-Luz (France)

A big seaside resort and fishing port near the French frontier, Fuenterrabía (Hondarribía in Basque) was, in theory, supposed to guard Spain against frequent attacks over the centuries and has performed that task with varying degrees of success.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Fuenterrabía doesn't have a **train** station but is serviced by the station in nearby Irún (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). Buses depart Irún's Plaza de San Juan for Fuentarrabía at 10- to 15-minute intervals. Irún is the end of the line for trains in northern Spain. East of Irún, you must board French trains.

Buses run every 20 minutes from Plaza Guipúzcoa in San Sebastián to Fuenterrabía, 30 to 45 minutes away. Call ✆ **94-364-13-02** for information. By car, take A-8 east to the French border, turning toward the coast at the exit sign for Fuenterrabía.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Calle Javier Ugarte 6 (www.bidasoaturismo.com; ✆ **94-364-54-58**), is open July to August daily 10:30am to 1:30am and 3:30 to 8pm; off-season hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1:30pm and 3:30 to 6:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Fuenterrabía

The most interesting part of town is the **medieval quarter,** where some of the villas date from the early 17th century. The fishing district in the lower part of town is called **La Marina;** old homes, painted boats, and marine atmosphere attract many visitors. Because restaurants in Fuenterrabía tend to be very expensive, you may want to fill up on seafood tapas in the waterfront taverns. The beach at Fuenterrabía is wide and sandy, and many prefer it to the more famous ones at San Sebastián.

Boats in La Marina.

Wander for an hour or two around the Old Quarter, taking in Calle Mayor, Calle Tiendas y Pampinot, and Calle Obispo. **Castillo de Carlos V,** standing at the Plaza de las Armas, has been turned into one of the most desirable *paradores* in Spain (Parador de Hondarribía, p. 615). It's hard to get a room here unless you reserve in advance, but you can visit the well-stocked bar.

Sancho Abarca, king of Navarra in the 10th century, is supposed to have founded the original castle that stood on this spot, but the present look owes more to Carlos V, the 16th-century Holy Roman emperor. You can still see battle scars on the castle dating from the time of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain.

The most impressive church in the Old Quarter is **Iglesia de Santa María,** a Gothic structure that was vastly restored in the 17th century and given a baroque tower.

If you have a car, you can take some interesting trips in the area, especially to **Cabo Higuer,** a promontory with panoramic views, reached by going 4km (2½ miles) north. Leave by the harbor and beach road. You can see the French coast and the town of Hendaye from this cape.

Where to Eat

Ramón Roteta ★★ BASQUE Named for its chef-owner, this attractive restaurant serves a Basque version of traditional haute cuisine in a heavily draped old-fashioned room. Located in a villa built in the 1920s, Ramón Roteta is on the

Sunset in the Basque Country

You can head west out of town along the **Jaizkibel Road ★★**, which many motorists prefer at sunset. After going 5km (3 miles), you'll reach the shrine of the **Virgen de Guadalupe,** where another panoramic view unfolds. From here, you can see the French Basque coast. If you continue on this road, you will come to the little fishing village of **Pasai Donibane,** 18km (11 miles) away.

southern outskirts of town, near the *parador.* Menu specialties include a terrine of green vegetables and fish served with red-pepper vinaigrette, baked sea crabs with tiny potatoes and onions, and fresh pasta with seafood. The dessert specialty is a mandarin-orange tart flavored with rose petals. The villa is surrounded by a pleasantly unstructured garden you can appreciate from a table on the terrace.

Calle Irún 2. www.roteta.com. ☎ **94-364-16-93.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 22€–34€; tasting menu 38€–68€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Closed 1 week in Nov.

Sebastián BASQUE In the oldest district of Fuenterrabía, close to the castle, this restaurant offers modern cuisine using top-notch seasonal ingredients. The two floors feature thick masonry walls, hung with an array of 18th-century paintings. Try one of the specialties: foie gras of duckling Basque style, terrine of fresh mushrooms, or medallions of sole and salmon with seafood sauce. Fresh hake is another specialty, coming with clams and green sauce, or else roasted and served with baked potatoes.

Mayor 9–11. www.sebastianhondarribia.com. ☎ **94-364-01-67.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–23€; tasting menu 42€–50€. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 12:30–3pm and 8–10:30pm. Closed last 2 weeks of Dec.

Where to Stay

Hotel Jáuregui ☺ Opened in 1981 in the center of the old village, this is a good choice for moderately priced accommodations. The modern interior boasts comfortable accessories, and the hotel has a garage—a plus, since parking in Fuenterrabía is almost impossible. Rooms are small but well furnished and maintained. Breakfast is the only meal served (not included in the rates quoted below). In addition to the small rooms, 11 units are apartments that can accommodate four to six guests—a good choice for families.

Zuloaga 5, 20280 Hondarribía. www.hoteljauregui.com. ☎ **94-364-14-00.** Fax 94-364-44-04. 42 units. 61€–162€ double; 104€–257€ apt. AE, MC, V. Parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Río Bidasoa ★ Five minutes from the center of town and only 5km (3 miles) west of the French border, this was an old mansion remodeled to become the modern hotel you see today. It's surrounded by one of the most beautiful gardens in the area. The exterior is crisp and white, with balustrades trimmed in wood. The rooms are midsize to spacious and furnished in contrasting styles—sometimes even in the same room.

Nafarroa Behera 1, 20280 Hondarribía. www.hotelriobidasoa.com. ☎ **94-364-54-08.** Fax 94-364-51-70. 44 units. 89€–193€ double; 108€–206€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Hondarribía ★★ This beautifully restored 10th-century castle on a hill in the center of the Old Town was once used by Emperor Carlos V as a border fortification. The building is impressive, and so are the taste and imagination of the restoration. Antiques, old weapons, and standards hang from the high vaulted ceilings, and some of the comfortable provincial-style rooms open onto the Bay of Biscay. Units range from small to midsize, each with a well-maintained bathroom. Breakfast is the only meal served. It's best to reserve a room here well in advance.

Plaza de Armas 14, 20280 Hondarribía. www.parador.es. ✆ **94-364-55-00.** Fax 94-364-21-53. 36 units. 125€–240€ double; 430€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar.

THE BASQUE COAST ★★

53km (33 miles) W of San Sebastián, 423km (263 miles) N of Madrid, 83km (52 miles) W of St-Jean-de-Luz (France)

The coastline between San Sebastián and Bilbao is a land of mythic proportions. The mountains of the Cordillera Cantábrico come down to the sea, where their fractured faces form the rocky cliffs and headlands that surround astonishing sandy beaches. Tides are long and currents strong in the river outlets, making for some of Europe's most spectacular waves. About half the coastal villages are beach resorts; the other half remain fishing villages in the tradition of those intrepid Basque whalers and cod fishermen who plied the coast of North America a century or more before Columbus set sail. They knew the way to the New World, but exhibiting the Basque head for business, they didn't see the point in sharing their secret.

Exploring the Basque Coast

The coast is best explored by automobile. Begin by driving west from San Sebastián on the AP-1/AP-8 for 20km (13 miles) to **Zarautz** (Zarauz in Castilian). Originally a whale-hunting village, it is now the largest Basque resort outside of San Sebastián. Waves crash along the 3km (1¾-mile) main beach with surf that nearly rivals Mundaka (see below). The seaside promenade is lined with contemporary avant-garde sculpture, giving Zarautz a hip, edgy look. The **Photomuseum,** Calle San Inazio 11 (www.photomuseum.es; ✆ **94-313-09-06**), has extensive exhibits detailing the evolution of the medium from wet-plate view cameras to digital imaging. Changing exhibitions usually feature Basque photographers. The museum is open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1pm and 5 to 8pm. It costs 6€ adults, 3€ seniors and students.

Continue west for 7km (4 miles) on the scenic coastal road, N-634, to **Getaria,** a fishing village that gave the world Juan Sebastián Elcano (Magellan's navigator) and fashion genius Cristóbal Balenciaga. Still primarily a fishing port, Getaria also has two long, sandy beaches. The hillsides above the coastal plain are renowned for the quality of their *txakolí* grapes. You'll find the bracing white wine served from the barrel in the portside tascas.

Just another 7km (4 miles) west on N-634, **Zumaia** is a fortified town with two great beaches flanking cliffs studded with fossils. The shore light is quite special here, seeming to come from all directions. Painter Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945) lived and worked here, and the **Museo Zuloaga,** Calle Santago Etxea s/n (www.ignaciozuloaga.com; ✆ **94-386-22-41**), fills a former hermitage that the painter bought to store his canvases. It is open from Easter through September Wednesday to Saturday 4 to 8pm and Sunday 11am to 2pm, and from October to Easter Saturday 4 to 7pm and Sunday 11am to 2pm.

It's a bit longer drive west along the coast via N-634 (24km/15 miles) and GI-638 (8km/5 miles) to reach **Ondarroa.** As you come into town, you'll see signs for **Playa Saturrarán,** a white-sand beach between two rocky headlands that is the Basque Country's best-known nudist beach. Ondarroa is the leading Basque fishing port, and its atmospheric medieval center surrounds a harbor packed with lively bars. The two principal landmarks in town are the 15th-century **Torre Likon** watchtower and the fortresslike **Gothic church of Santa María,** which seems to have grown out of the rock on which it stands.

Twisted roads follow seaside cliffs west to **Lekeitio,** 15km (9⅓ miles) from Ondarroa. The landscape changes once you arrive: The mouth of the Río Lea defines the harbor. The river is lined by two shallow swimming beaches. The town itself is mixed between fishing (tuna, mainly) and tourism. Overlooking the harbor, the **Basilica de Santa María de la Asunción,** Calle Abaroa s/n (www.basilicadelekeitio.com; ✆ **94-684-09-54**), has dramatic flying buttresses. The gold-plated Flemish altarpiece depicts scenes from the life of the Virgin and the Passion of Christ. It's free and open for visits Monday to Saturday 8am to noon and 5 to 7:30pm.

Getting to the next coastal village calls for a long detour upriver to Gernika (p. 618). Go 22km (14 miles) west on BI-2238, then 11km (6¾ miles) north on BI-2235 to **Mundaka,** the surfing capital of Spain's north coast. Long rollers and huge left-curling pipelines speed up the narrowing mouth of the river here, creating some of Spain's top surfing conditions in what is otherwise a gentle little fishing town with great swimming beaches. During the first quarter of the year (always announced at the last minute), the Billabong Mundaka Challenge pits some of the world's top pro surfers against the best of the Basque coast. The **Mundaka Surf Shop,** Paseo Txorrokopunta 10 (www.mundakasurfshop.com; ✆ **94-687-67-21**), rents gear and offers lessons. If you want to pick the brains of local surfers about the best breaks, try buying them a beer at **Bar Los Txopos** at Calle Kepa Duenaren s/n (✆ **94-687-64-82**).

This tour of the Basque coast concludes with the medieval fishing village of **Bermeo,** just 5km (3 miles) north on BI-2235. Pleasure boats have largely replaced fishing vessels in the pocket harbor, but big diesel-powered trawlers lie at anchor in deeper water just offshore. The replica whaling schooner ***Aita Guria Baleontzia*** ★, Calle Lamera s/n (www.aitaguria.bermeo.org; ✆ **94-617-91-21**), lies berthed against the stone wharves, a reminder that Bermeo's whalers hunted along the Cantabrian coast until the late 15th century, but soon began to venture to Greenland, Canada, and Maine. It is open April through October Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm. It costs 5€ adults, 3€ ages 4 to 14. The last fortified tower of the town, the 15th-century Torre Ercilla, is home of the **Museo del Pescador** ★ (www.bizkaia.net/museodelpescador; ✆ **94-688-11-71**). Exhibits cast back to Bermeo's involvement with Magellan's voyage, but focus more on the modern in-shore fishery, especially for anchovies. An entire floor is dedicated to preserving fish by drying and canning. Stirring displays explain how the fishermen created their brotherhood in the 19th century to manage the fishery, extract a fair price, and help families of men lost at sea. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2:15pm. It costs 3€ adults, 1.50€ students and seniors, and free for kids under age 12.

Where to Eat

Karlos Arguiñano ★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE The eponymous chef-owner of this hotel and restaurant is a celebrity chef on Spanish television and a popular author of cookbooks. He is so busy that he leaves the spectacular cuisine of the restaurant to executive chef Mikel Mayán. One intimate room offers a set gourmet menu, while a larger room with sea views permits more economical dining. While the a la carte menu preserves some of Mayán's greatest hits, it focuses on more traditional Basque grilled meat and seafood.

Calle Mendilauta 13, Zarautz. www.hotelka.es. ✆ **94-313-00-00.** Main dishes 18€–24€; tasting menu 60€. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Tues and Thurs 1–3:30pm; Fri–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm.

Restaurante Elkano ★★★ BASQUE SEAFOOD The preparations are simple (mostly grilling) at this Getaria landmark founded in 1964 by chef Pedro Arregui, a pioneer of roasting whole fish over a wood fire. Elkano is legendary among Basques as their greatest seafood grill restaurant. Don't be surprised to see patrons eating with their hands—your waiter might even take away your silverware to force you to do the same. It definitely makes for a full-immersion experience and could change your entire approach to eating fish.

Calle Herrerieta 2, Getaria. www.restauranteelkano.com. ✆ **94-314-00-24.** Main dishes 16€–40€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Closed first half of Apr.

Restaurante Jokin ★ BASQUE SEAFOOD Bermeo's atmospheric harbor is bound to make you hungry for fish, and Jokin is just the place to get it, complete with great views of the fishing fleet from atop the stone wharves. Daily menus hit local highlights like cod "meatballs" or roasted bonito with fresh asparagus.

Calle Eupeme Deuna 13, Bermeo. www.restaurantejokin.com. ✆ **94-688-40-89.** Main dishes 12€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8–10pm; Sun 1–3:30pm.

Where to Stay

Atalaya Hotel Literally steps from Mundaka's great surfing, this charming family-run hotel is also right next to a quiet, tree-shaded waterfront park. Grass mats on the floors create a tropical air—and catch the sand before it scratches the lovingly polished floors.

Calle Itxaropen 1, Mundaka. www.atalayahotel.es. ✆ **94-617-70-00.** 13 units. 98€–108€ double. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Cafe; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Emperatriz Zita ★ 🏷 The last empress of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Zita, lived out her exile in the palace whose ruins were the foundations for this modern spa-hotel. Set right on the ocean, it's a view fit for royalty and is extremely popular for weddings and honeymoons. It's also a true bargain. Spa treatment packages are also reasonable

Calle Santa Elena s/n, Lekeitio. www.aisiahoteles.com. ✆ **94-684-26-55.** 42 units. 86€–132€ double; 116€–132€ suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; sauna; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

GERNIKA-LOMO

428km (266 miles) N of Madrid, 84km (52 miles) W of San Sebastián

The subject of Picasso's most famous painting (now displayed at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, p. 90), Gernika-Lomo was the spiritual home of the Basques and the seat of Basque nationalism. The town was destroyed in a Nazi air raid on April 26, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, and may have been targeted because it was the site of a revered oak tree under whose branches Basques had elected their officials since medieval times. No one knows how many died during the attack—estimates range from 200 to 2,000. The bombers reduced the town

The stained-glass ceiling of the Casa de Juntas, depicting Gernika's oak tree.

to rubble, but a mighty symbol of independence was born. Although activists around the world attempted to rally support for the embattled Spanish Republicans, governments everywhere, including that of the United States, left the Spaniards to fend for themselves, refusing to supply them with arms.

Picasso knew the town by its Castilian name—hence the title of the painting—but "Guernica" is not used here. A symbol of Basque resilience, it goes by Gernika-Lomo. The town has been attractively rebuilt close to its former style. A church bell chimes softly, and laughing children play in the street. In the midst of this peace, however, you suddenly come upon a sign: SOUVENIRS . . . REMEMBER.

The former Basque parliament, **Casa de Juntas,** Juntetxea (✆ **94-625-11-38**), is the principal attraction in town. It contains a historical display of Gernika and is open June to September daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and October to May daily 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm. Admission is free. Outside are the remains of the ancient communal oak tree, which wasn't uprooted by Hitler's bombs. From the train station, head up Calle Urioste.

Fundación Museo de la Paz de Gernika, Foru Plaza 1 (www.museodelapaz.org; ✆ **94-627-02-13**), contains a permanent exhibition of the bombing as depicted in photographs and artifacts, including bomb fragments bearing Luftwaffe markings. The bombing on a market day (greater casualties that way) began at 4pm and lasted for 1 to 3 hours, as Nazi bombers unloaded thousand-pound bombs and incendiary projectiles on the helpless Basque populace. On one wall of the museum is a framed letter from President Roman Herzog of Germany, dated March 27, 1997, acknowledging German responsibility for the indefensible act and calling for reconciliation and peace. Copies of Picasso's working drawings for *Guernica* are also displayed.

July and August, the museum is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 8pm and Sunday 10am to 3pm; September to June, it's open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday from 10am to 2pm. Admission is 4€ for adults, 2€ for students and seniors, and free for kids under 12.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Bizkaibus,** at Calle Iparraguirre 4, runs buses to Bilbao, with connections to Gernika. For information, visit www.bizkaia.net or call ✆ **90-222-22-65.**

If you're driving, from Bilbao head east along the A-8 superhighway; cut north on the 6315 and follow the signs for Gernika. From San Sebastián, drive west along A-8, and cut north on the 6315. A more scenic but slightly longer route involves driving west from San Sebastián on the A-8, and branching off on the coastal road to Ondarroa. Continue on as the road turns south and follow the signs to Gernika.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** is at Calle Artekalea 8 (www.gernika-lumo.net; ✆ **94-625-58-92**). In summer, hours are Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm and Sunday 10am to 2pm; off season, it is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm.

Where to Stay & Eat

Baserri Maitea ★ 🎁 BASQUE This 3-century-old Basque *caserío* (farmhouse) is located a few kilometers outside Gernika in the village of Forua on the Mundaka road. Wooden beams hold the place together, and strings of garlic and red peppers grown in the countryside set the decorative tone. Squab with a caramelized glaze is delicious, as is the baby milk-fed lamb roasted in a wood-fired oven. That same oven serves to roast a gorgeous whole *besugo* (sea bream). Look also for the catch of the day—which is often skate or *raya,* a bony white-fleshed fish common in Basque waters and often served with an aromatic green sauce.

Barrio Atxondoa s/n, Forua. www.grupozaldua.com. ✆ **94-625-34-08.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 17€–29€; fixed-price menus 38€–70€. AE, MC, V. Daily 1–3:30pm; Fri–Sat 9–11pm.

Hotel Boliña This little place is modesty itself but provides a decent shelter for those who come to Gernika wanting to absorb its regional atmosphere. It's a small, contemporary structure with simply furnished rooms, each with a tiny bathroom. The staff is helpful and inviting, although English is hardly the native tongue around here.

Barrenkale 3, 48300 Gernika. www.hotelbolina.net. ✆ **94-625-03-00.** Fax 94-625-03-04. 16 units. 39€–48€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV.

Hotel Gernika Because so many pilgrims flock to this scene of the notorious air-raid massacre, the town has needed a first-rate hotel. This is as close as it gets: It's not the Ritz, but it offers relatively modest comfort. Guest rooms are midsize and comfortably furnished, each with a small, tiled bathroom. Breakfast is served, but there is no on-site restaurant. Several simple cafeterias and bars are nearby for other meals.

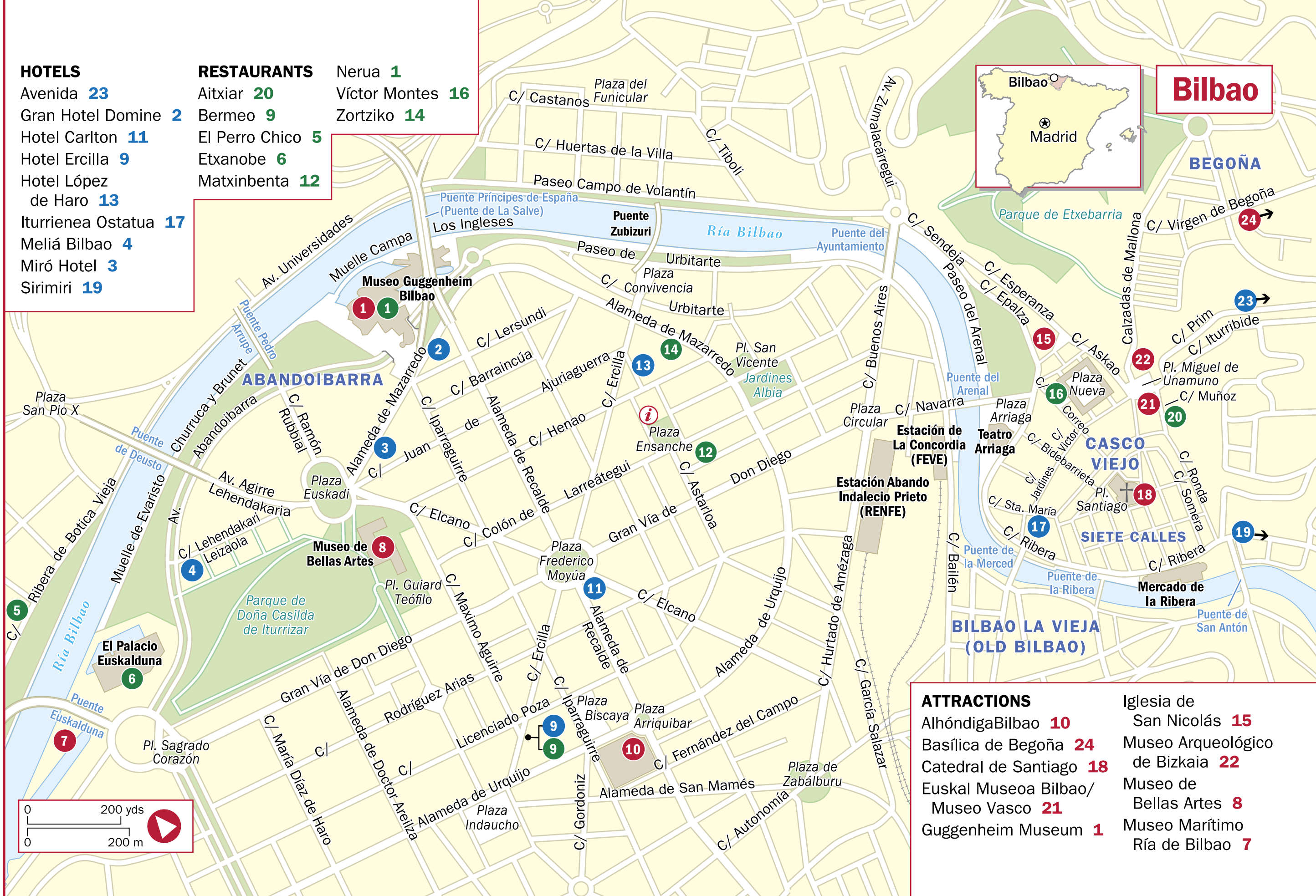
Carlos Gangoiti 17, 48300 Gernika. www.hotel-gernika.com. ✆ **94-625-03-50.** Fax 94-625-58-74. 40 units. 72€–82€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

BILBAO ★★★

396km (246 miles) N of Madrid, 100km (62 miles) W of San Sebastián

Bilbainos believe in art, and with good reason. The 21st-century Bilbao (Bilbo in Basque) is a case study in the transformative power of art, or at least of architecture. As recently as the 1980s, Bilbao was a smoky steel-making and ship-building city on the banks of a severely polluted river. But today it is a graceful small metropolis with a sort of muscular appeal. Instead of seeing smoke and grime, visitors acclaim broad avenues, lovely river vistas, and the veritable sculpture park of cutting-edge architecture.

Bilbao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C/ Virgen de Begoña
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Calzadas de Mallona
C/ Prim
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C/ Muñoz
C/ Askao
Plaza Nueva
C/ Correo
C/ Victor
C/ Bidebarrieta
C/ Jardines
C/ Sta. María
Pl. Santiago
CASCO VIEJO
SIETE CALLES
C/ Ronda
C/ Somera
C/ Ribera
Mercado de la Ribera
Puente de San Antón
Puente de la Ribera
Puente de la Merced
BILBAO LA VIEJA (OLD BILBAO)
C/ Bailén
C/ Esperanza
C/ Epalza
C/ Sendeja
Paseo del Arenal
Puente del Arenal
Plaza Arriaga
Teatro Arriaga
Estación de La Concordia (FEVE)
Estación Abando Indalecio Prieto (RENFE)
C/ Navarra
Plaza Circular
C/ Buenos Aires
Av. Zumalacárregui
Puente del Ayuntamiento
Ría Bilbao
C/ Tiboli
C/ Huertas de la Villa
Paseo Campo de Volantín
C/ Castanos
Plaza del Funicular
Puente Zubizuri
Paseo de Urbitarte
Plaza Convivencia
C/ Urbitarte
Alameda de Mazarredo
Pl. San Vicente
Jardines Albia
Puente Príncipes de España (Puente de La Salve)
Los Ingleses
Muelle Campa
Av. Universidades
Museo Guggenheim Bilbao
C/ Lersundi
C/ Barraincúa
Ajuriaguerra
C/ Ercilla
C/ Henao
Plaza Ensanche
C/ Astarloa
Don Diego
Larreátegui
C/ Juan de Ajuriaguerra
C/ Iparraguirre
Alameda de Recalde
C/ Colón de Larreátegui
Gran Vía de Don Diego
C/ Hurtado de Amézaga
C/ García Salazar
Alameda de Urquijo
C/ Elcano
Plaza Frederico Moyúa
C/ Maximo Aguirre
Licenciado Poza
Plaza Biscaya
Plaza Arriquibar
C/ Fernández del Campo
Alameda de San Mamés
Plaza de Zabálburu
C/ Autonomía
C/ Gordoniz
Plaza Indaucho
Alameda de Doctor Areilza
C/ María Díaz de Haro
C/ Rodríguez Arias
Pl. Guiard Teófilo
Museo de Bellas Artes
Parque de Doña Casilda de Iturrizar
Plaza Euskadi
Av. Agirre Lehendakaria
C/ Lehendakari Leizaola
C/ Ramón Rubbial
ABANDOIBARRA
Abandoibarra
Churruca y Brunet
Puente Pedro Arrupe
Puente de Deusto
Plaza San Pio X
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C/ Ribera de Botica Vieja
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The audacity of the government to court the Guggenheim Museum in New York and to engage controversial architect Frank O. Gehry to design the Guggenheim Bilbao has paid off. The opening of the Guggenheim in 1997 began the transformation of the riverfront and turned a provincial city of 355,000 into what Gehry himself has called a laboratory for contemporary architecture. Among architects, you're nobody until you have a building in Bilbao.

Bilbao continues to flourish as a banking and services center, long after most of the manufacturing has gone elsewhere. Even with all the cranes erecting new skyscrapers, Bilbao feels very open, extending more than 8km (5 miles) along the valley of the Río Nervión. The shipyards and factories of the waterfront have been replaced with channeled banks, and a ribbonlike park stretches from the Old Quarter, **Bilbao La Vieja,** all the way to the **Abandoibarra** barrio, which includes the Guggenheim. Under a master plan by architect Cesar Pelli, the waterfront was reshaped as a green, human-scale place. The elegant footbridge over the river near the Guggenheim, the **Pasarela Zubizuri,** summarizes the spirit of the new Bilbao. Designed by Santiago Calatrava, it is sinuous and monumental, yet it is for walkers, not vehicles. At the same time, the city government upgraded the transportation infrastructure, installing a new airport by Calatrava and an efficient and attractive Metro system. Its entrances are a futuristic version of the Paris Metro entrances; locals call the glass hoods *fosteritos* in deference to their designer, Sir Norman Foster.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **Bilbao Airport** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**) is 8km (5 miles) north of the city, near the town of Erandio. Flights arrive from Madrid, Barcelona, Alicante, Arrecife, Fuenteventura, Las Palmas, Málaga, Palma, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla, Tenerife, Valencia, Vigo, Brussels, Frankfurt, Lisbon, London, Milan, Paris, and Zurich. **Iberia**'s main booking office in Bilbao is at the airport (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**), open daily from 5am to 10pm. From the airport into town, take bus no. A3247 for 3.50€.

The **RENFE train** station, Estación de Abando (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), is on Plaza Circular 2, just off Plaza de España. From here, you can catch short-distance trains within the metropolitan area of Bilbao (Euskotren), medium-distance trains along the north coast (FEVE), and long-distance trains to most parts of Spain. Two trains per day run to and from Madrid on weekdays, one on weekends (5 hr.). Two trains per day run to and from Barcelona (trip time: 6¼ hr.), and one train per day goes to and from Galicia (trip time: 12 hr.). There are also two night trains per week to and from the Mediterranean Coast: one toward Alicante and Valencia (daily during the summer months), and the other toward Málaga (three times a week in summer).

PESA, at the Estación de Buses de Garillano (www.pesa.net; ✆ **90-210-12-10**), operates more than a dozen **buses** per day to and from San Sebastián (trip time: 1¼ hr.). **Continental Auto,** Calle Gurtubay 1 (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**), has nine buses per day from Madrid (trip time: 5 hr.). If you'd like to explore either Lekeitio (p. 617) or Gernika (p. 618) by bus, use the services of **Bizkaibus** (www.bizkaia.net; ✆ **90-222-22-65**). Fifteen buses per day go to Lekeitio Monday to Saturday and two on Sunday. Trip time is 45 minutes. Ten buses run each weekday to Gernika (trip time: 45 min.). On weekends, only five buses per day go to Gernika. For general bus information, call ✆ **94-439-50-77.**

Bilbao is beside the A-8, linking the cities of Spain's northern Atlantic seacoast to western France. It is connected by superhighway to both Barcelona and Madrid.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Plaza Ensanche 11 (www.bilbao.net; ✆ **94-479-57-60**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 4 to 7:30pm. Depending on funding, it is also open weekends in summer. **Satellite tourist offices** are located at the **Guggenheim Bilbao Museum** (no phone), and in the **Old Quarter at the Arriaga Theater** on Plaza Arriaga (no phone). They are both open daily.

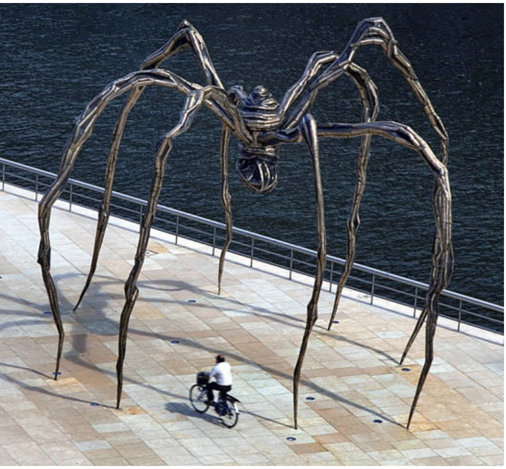
SPECIAL EVENTS The biggest and most widely publicized festival is **La Semana Grande,** dedicated to the Virgin of Begoña and lasting from mid-August to early September. During the celebration, the Río Nervión is the site of many flotillas and regattas. July 25 brings the festival of Bilbao's patron saint, **Santiago (St. James);** July 31 is the holiday devoted to the region's patron saint, **St. Ignatius.**

Exploring Bilbao

The **Río Nervión** meanders through Bilbao, whose historic core was built inside one of its loops, with water protecting it on three sides. Most of the important shops, banks, and tourist facilities are a short walk from the **Gran Vía,** running east-west through the heart of town. **Bilbao La Vieja,** the Old Quarter, is east of the modern commercial center, across the river.

AlhóndigaBilbao 🎁 CULTURAL INSTITUTION French furniture and product designer Philippe Starck made his public debut as an architect by remaking this one-time *modernisme* white elephant as Bilbao's cultural and sporting center. Opened in 1909 as a wine-storage facility, the building was devastated by fire 10 years later. The shell of brick, iron, and concrete waited decades for this reincarnation before finally opening in 2010. The subterranean levels contain an exhibition gallery and a concert hall. Starck kept the ground level intentionally dark to encourage romantic trysts, and it is a forest of columns decorated in different whimsical motifs. They support brick and glass cubes containing a multimedia public library, a state-of-the-art gym, and a rooftop swimming pool. The Alhóndiga also has its own cafes, restaurants, and bars. You can find a book in the library stacks, head to the roof, order a drink at the bar, and stretch out by the pool to read.

Plaza Arriquibar 4. www.alhondigabilbao.com. ✆ **94-401-40-14.** Free admission. Mon–Thurs 7am–11pm; Fri 7am–midnight; Sat 8:30am–midnight; Sun 8:30am–11pm. 6€ per day to use gym or pool. Metro: Indautxu or Moyua.



The spider sculpture *Maman* outside the Guggenheim Museum.

Euskal Museoa Bilbao/Museo Vasco MUSEUM Closed for renovations until 2014, this museum is devoted to Basque archaeology, ethnology, and history. It is located in the center of the Old Quarter, in a centuries-old Jesuit cloister. In its previous incarnation, exhibits showcased Basque commercial life during the 16th century with everything from ship models to shipbuilding tools, along with reconstructions of rooms illustrating political and social life. The museum also displayed equipment used to play the popular Basque game of *pelota* (jai alai).

Plaza Miguel de Unamuno 4. http://euskal-museoa.org. ☎ **94-415-54-23.** Fax 94-479-06-08. Admissions and times to be confirmed on re-opening in 2014.

Guggenheim Museum ★★★ ART MUSEUM Modeled in part on the forms of fish body parts (a Gehry trademark) and covered in a skin of anodized titanium, the 104,700-sq.-m (1,126,980-sq.-ft.) colossus seems simultaneously primitive and futuristic. The best view of the armored beast is from across the river, where you can take in its entirety. The building itself is its most important exhibit, and guided tours inevitably focus more on the architectural wonders than on the changing art galleries.

The interior is as radical as the exterior, featuring a 50m-high (164-ft.) atrium—more than 1½ times the height of the rotunda of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York. When you enter, pick up the free audio guide and listen carefully to the introductory tracks, which explain how to navigate the galleries.

The Guggenheim focuses mainly on the major artists of the latter half of the 20th century—including Picasso, Robert Motherwell, Robert Rauschenberg, Clyfford Still, Antoni Tàpies, Andy Warhol, Ives Klein, and Willem de Koonig. The Bilbao branch also collects and shows work by contemporary Basque artists. Artwork lent by the Guggenheims in New York and Venice rotates, and Bilbao hosts temporary exhibits from New York. Signage in Basque, Castilian, and English places most exhibitions in their art-historical context and helps visitors appreciate the work beyond the immediate "wow" factor.

Calle Abandoibarra 2. www.guggenheim-bilbao.es. ☎ **94-435-90-80.** Admission 13€ adults, 7.50€ seniors and students, free for children 11 and under. Sept–June Tues–Sun 10am–8pm; July–Aug daily 10am–8pm. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25. Bus: 1, 10, 13, or 18. Metro: Moyúa, Tranvia: Guggenheim. *Warning:* Cars parked in the surface Plaza Euskadi lot near the museum are often robbed, so consider taking public transit or a taxi, or parking in the underground Pio Baroja garage accessed from Av. Abandoibarra.

They Call It Puppy Love

Critics love to debate the merits of Frank O. Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, but considering the museum in isolation misses the point. Bilbainos have embraced the surrounding plazas and made the pavements their own. Skateboard kids love the ramps and smooth-rolling runs, while soccer tykes kick balls against the walls. The greatest irony might be that Jeff Koons's goofy 43-foot-tall flower-sprouting ***Puppy*** sculpture has almost upstaged the limestone and titanium building. Installed as a temporary exhibit for the 1997 opening, it was saved from demolition through a letter-writing campaign by local schoolchildren.

Museo Arqueológica de Bizkaia ★ MUSEUM Tracing the human presence in the Bay of Biscay from the arrival of Neanderthal man 100,000 years ago to the emergence of a coherent Basque region in the Middle Ages, this museum opened in April 2009 on the slopes of the Old Quarter. Plaques in Castilian and Basque explain the prehistoric stone tools, Celtiberian stone carvings and jewelry, and pottery from Neolithic through Roman times. Curators use an unbroken string of archaeological artifacts to make a case that the Basques are, in fact, the first modern humans in Europe—predating the migration from India and the Near East by tens of thousands of years.

Calzadas de Mallona 2. www.bizkaia.net. ✆ **94-404-09-90.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students and seniors, 11 and under free, free last Fri of month. Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–7:30pm; Sun 10:30am–2pm. Metro: Casco Viejo. Tranvia: Unamuno.

Museo de Bellas Artes ★★ ART MUSEUM After the disorientation of the Guggenheim, you might find the Fine Arts Museum a relief. It is a striking conventional museum with both medieval and modern works, including paintings by Velázquez, Goya, Zurbarán, and El Greco. But the real highlights of the collections are the Spanish Gothic painting and sculpture from the 12th to 14th centuries, early-20th-century Basque and Cantabrian regional painting, and several powerful sculptures by Eduardo Chillida, who created a massive piece titled *Monument to Iron*. You can also walk in the English-inspired gardens around the museum.

Plaza del Museo 2. www.museobilbao.com. ✆ **94-439-60-60.** Admission 6€ adults, 4.50€ seniors and students, free for children 11 and under, free for all Wed. Tues–Sun 10am–8pm. Metro: Moyúa.

A bust in the Museo de Bellas Artes.

Museo Marítimo Ría de Bilbao MUSEUM Bilbao was the great shipbuilding center of the Cantabrian coast through much of the 19th and 20th centuries, and this new museum on the site of one of the last shipyards chronicles the city's maritime history. Several restored historic ships are displayed in outdoor exhibits. The indoor displays focus both on the sea-going history of the city and on the transformation of the industrial waterfront into an amenity for Bilbainos and an attraction for visitors.

Muelle Ramón de la Sota1. www.museomaritimobilbao.org. ✆ **94-608-55-00.** Admission 5€ adults, 3.50€ students and seniors, free 5 and under. Oct–June Tues–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–8pm; July–Sept daily 10am–8pm.

EXPLORING LA VIEJA (THE OLD QUARTER) ★

Despite the fact that Bilbao was established around 1300, it has curiously few medieval monuments. On the east side of the Río Nervión, it does have an intriguing Old Quarter, the site of many interesting bars and restaurants, where Bilbainos and tourists alike gather to bar-hop.

A plaza in Bilbao La Vieja.

The Old Quarter of Bilbao is connected to the much larger modern section on the opposite bank by four bridges. A few paces north of the Old Quarter's center are **graceful arches,** 64 in all, enclosing the Plaza Nueva, also called the Plaza de los Mártires, completed in 1826. (Only in a city dating from 1300 could a square built in 1826 be called "new.")

The entire barrio has been declared a national landmark. The barrio was originally defined by an area around seven streets, but it long ago spilled beyond that limitation. Its most important church is **Iglesia de San Nicolás** (✆ **94-416-34-24**). Behind this church you'll find an elevator on Calle Esperanza Ascao, which rises to the upper town. It is open daily from 10:30am to 12:30pm and 3:30 to 8pm. You can also climb 64 steps from the Plaza Unamuno. From here it's a short walk to the **Basílica de Begoña** (✆ **94-412-70-91**), built largely in the early 1500s. Inside the dimly lit church is a brightly illuminated depiction of the Virgin, the patroness of the province, dressed in long, flowing robes. Hours are daily 10:30am to 2pm and 5:30 to 8:30pm. While in the Old Quarter, you might visit the **Catedral de Santiago,** Plaza Santiago (✆ **94-432-01-25**), which was built in the 14th century and then restored in the 16th century after a fire. The cathedral's facade was rebuilt in the 19th century. It is open daily 11am to 1pm and 4 to 6:30pm. On Sunday, a **flea market** starts at 8am on the streets of the Old Quarter.

To reach the Old Quarter on foot, the only way to explore it, take the Puente del Arenal from the Gran Vía, Bilbao's main street. From the Guggenheim Bilbao, hop the Tranvía to Pio Baroja or the Metro to Casco Viejo—or enjoy the walk down the riverfront promenade.

Shopping

Many visitors like to return from the Basque Country with a beret, which locals call *txapelas*. The best selection is found at **Sombreros Gorostiaga,** Calle Victor 9 (✆ **94-416-12-76**), a family-owned business since 1857. If you'd like to purchase Basque artisanal products, head for **Basandere,** Iparraguirre Kalea 4 (✆ **94-423-63-86**), near the Guggenheim Museum. Their crafts are of high quality, and every 3 months they stage exhibitions by local artists. The shop also sells gourmet Basque food items.

There are lots of art galleries to explore in Bilbao. One of them, **Sala Rekalde,** Recalde Zumarkalea 30 (www.salarekalde.bizkaia.net; ✆ **94-406-87-55**), is within walking distance of the Guggenheim. The **Gran Hotel Domine,** Alameda de Mazarredo 61 (www.hoteles-silken.com; ✆ **94-425-33-00**), also has a small art gallery across from the Guggenheim.

Where to Eat

EXPENSIVE

Bermeo ★★ BASQUE This hotel restaurant has been tastefully redecorated to rescue it from its outdated Belle Epoque heaviness. The food remains as formal and beautifully executed as ever—a Basque interpretation of French haute cuisine—and the service from the uniformed staff is impeccable. Menu items change with the seasons but might include a salad of lettuce hearts in saffron dressing with smoked salmon, homemade foie gras with essence of bay leaves, five different preparations of cod, or stewed partridge with glazed shallots. For dessert, try the truffled figs. If all this is too haute, the hotel has a Bistro Bermeo serving more casual food in more casual surroundings.

In the Hotel Ercilla (p. 630), Ercilla 37–39. www.hotelercilla.es. ✆ **94-470-57-00.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–34€; tasting menus 33€–49€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Sat 8:30–11:30pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Metro: Indautxu.

Etxanobe ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE In the gleaming Palacio Euskalduna, this postmodern restaurant is deservedly one of the hottest dining tickets in Bilbao. The personable, immensely talented Fernando Canales runs the show between his busy schedule of TV shows and public appearances. (He is Bilbao's rock-star chef.) The bountiful cuisine is made from only the freshest of ingredients and handled with precision and skill by the kitchen staff. Try the grilled codfish with caramelized baby leeks, roasted scallops in a leek vinaigrette sauce, or boiled hake with seaweed cream. Let Canales confound expectations with such dishes as poached eggs with beef kidneys and foie gras, and codfish in a licorice *pil-pil* sauce with fresh pumpkin.

Av. de Abandoibarra 4. www.etxanobe.com. ✆ **94-442-10-71.** Reservations required. Main courses 19€–40€; tasting menus 59€–65€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm (Fri–Sat until midnight). Closed Aug 1–15.

Nerua ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE The Guggenheim Bilbao raised the ante on its fine-dining restaurant at the end of May 2011 when Nerua opened under young star chef Josean Alija. The restaurant is located inside the museum next to Richard Serra's *The Matter of Time*, but has its own entrance from the river promenade. Look for some of Alija's prize-winning dishes, such as roast duck foie gras with candied carrots, or the cold juice of bitter cocoa with milk and anise ice cream. Dining at Nerua is like visiting the museum galleries: You might not immediately recognize what you're experiencing, but it will be contemporary art at the highest level.

Abandoibarra Etorbidea 2. www.nerua.com. ✆ **94-400-04-30.** Reservations required (as far in advance as possible). Main courses 22€–35€; tasting menu 70€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–3:15pm; Wed–Sat 9–10:30pm. Closed 2 weeks at Christmas. Metro: Moyúa. Bus: 1, 10, 13, or 18.

Zortziko ★★★ CONTEMPORARY BASQUE This bastion of refined Basque cuisine is the purview of chef Daniel García (not to be confused with Dani García of Marbella's Calima, p. 366). The dining rooms are decorated in

French Empire style, which makes the restaurant seem more formal than it is. One of the more unusual dining areas is the wine cellar, where the only table is reserved, sometimes many days in advance. Your table will more likely be on street level. García makes most of the traditional Basque staples, like pigeon breast or sea bass marinated and roasted in red Rioja wine, but he tends to give them a brightly modern twist. The tasting menu presents a wide variety of imaginative dishes, including roast suckling pig flavored with cinnamon oil, or guinea fowl with the tantalizing addition of truffle juice.

Alameda de Mazarredo 17. www.zortziko.es. ✆ **94-423-97-43.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–50€; fixed-price menus 75€–85€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Metro: Abando.

MODERATE

El Perro Chico BASQUE At the edge of the Old Quarter by the fresh food market, the Little Dog is on every visitor's list of "finds." It does serve all the casual Basque classics, and proximity to the market guarantees the best of ingredients. Start with grilled fresh anchovies or long green *guindilla* peppers that have been fried and finished with sea salt flakes. Other temptations include roast duck in orange sauce served with seasonal vegetables or codfish au gratin topped with béchamel.

Aretxaga 2. ✆ **94-415-05-19.** Reservations required. Main courses 14€–30€. MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9:15–11:30pm.

Matxinbenta ★ BASQUE Serving solid Basque food since the 1950s, this restaurant is popular for business lunches and dinners despite a staff that can be sometimes abrupt. Specialties include fresh tuna in piquant tomato sauce, and a local variant of ratatouille known as *piperada*. One of the best fish dishes is the plate of stuffed spider crab. You can order veal cutlets cooked in port wine, and finish with a mint-flavored fresh-fruit cocktail. Matxinbenta contains three dining rooms, each with contemporary furniture, potted plants, and lots of exposed wood.

Ledesma 26. http://matxinbenta.restaurantesok.com. ✆ **94-424-84-95.** Reservations required Fri–Sat. Main courses 15€–28€; *menú del día* 30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 8–11pm; Sun 1–4pm. Metro: Moyúa.

INEXPENSIVE

Aitxiar 🏷 BASQUE Well respected for its good food, low prices, and lack of pretension, this restaurant in the Old Quarter serves traditional Basque cooking in two dining rooms in a house built in the 1930s. The decor strives to be old-fashioned, with lots of stone and exposed wood, suggesting that if it looks like grandma's house, the food must be good. In fact, it is. Try the potato soup with chunks of fresh tuna, or choose from the ice-packed array of fish hauled in fresh that morning. Two of the most appealing fish dishes are cod, either in *pil-pil* sauce or roasted cheeks. Grilled baby squid are always a good choice, as are the *chuletas* (spicy sausages).

Calle María Muñoz 8. ✆ **94-415-09-17.** Main courses 12€–25€; fixed-price lunch 9€–50€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed 3 weeks in Aug. Metro: Plaza Unamuno.

Víctor Montes ★ BASQUE The flagship restaurant on Plaza Nueva, Victor Montes has a handful of dining rooms—some upstairs—where closely packed tables, racks of wine, and frantic waiters create a sense of good-natured hysteria, especially at lunchtime. When the weather cooperates, they always set tables in the plaza. Expect copious portions of old-fashioned roasts, stews, soups, and salads, usually with an emphasis on fresh vegetables and seafood such as grilled squid or fresh fava beans with nuggets of cod. Many locals bypass a dining table altogether, opting for *raciones* of seafood bites and mountain charcuterie. Lined up atop the bar, the small plates taste wonderful with wine, beer, or cider.

Plaza Nueva 8. www.victormontesbilbao.com. ✆ **94-415-70-67.** Reservations recommended for full meals; not necessary for tapas bar. Main courses 10€–24€; *pintxos* from 1.50€, *raciones* from 4€; set menus 36€–50€. MC, V. Daily 11am–11pm. Metro: Casco Viejo.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Bilbao is not quite the gastronomic destination as San Sebastián, but it is definitely catching up. Going out for drinks and *pintxos* is one of the chief forms of evening entertainment here. The best place for tapas bars is **Calle Licenciado Poza,** between Alameda del Doctor Areilza and Calle Iparraguirre, in the Ensanche neighborhood. Favorites include **Atlanta,** Calle Rodríguez Arias 28 (www.restauranteatlanta.com; ✆ **94-441-53-32**), famous locally for its *jamón serrano* (cured ham) sandwiches. We're also fond of **Busterri Restaurante,** Calle Licenciado Poza 43 (✆ **94-441-50-67**), where roast cod with tomato coulis is both quintessentially Basque and just slightly innovative.

Plaza Nueva is another good choice for bar-hopping. **Café Bar Bilbao,** Plaza Nueva 6 (www.bilbao-cafebar.com; ✆ **94-415-16-71**), has two very traditional *pintxos* that are perfectly executed: fresh anchovies wrapped around green olives, and *bacalao al pil-pil* (salt cod with garlic-parsley emulsion).

From Plaza Nueva wander through the Casco Viejo's narrow alleyways, two of which (**Calle Pozas** and **Calle Barrencalle**) are dotted with all manner of bars and bodegas. After a drink or two, you might opt to go out dancing, or at least visit any of three popular discos. Favorites include **Disco-Pub Crystal,** Plaza Venezuela 1 (✆ **94-424-25-08**). The top gay male dance hall is **High Club,** Naja 5 (no phone), where loud music and hot men rule the night. Adult films—usually American—are featured upstairs.

On Friday and Saturday nights from 6:30pm to 6:30am, the bar that's jumping is **Cotton Club,** Calle Gregorio de la Revilla 25 (www.cottonclubbilbao.es; ✆ **94-410-49-51**), which bears little resemblance to its Harlem namesake. More than 30,000 beer caps form part of the decor. A DJ spins the latest tunes for the mingling throngs in their 20s and 30s. The atmosphere is less hectic when the club is open Sunday from 6:30pm to 3am, and Monday and Thursday from 4:30pm to 3am. Beer begins at 3€, whiskey at 5.50€, and there's no cover.

The major cultural venue in Bilbao is the **Teatro Arriaga Antzokia,** Plaza Arriaga s/n (www.teatroarriaga.com; ✆ **94-416-35-33**), on the banks of the Río Nervión. This is the setting for world-class opera, classical music concerts, ballet, and even *zarzuelas* (comic operas). Announcements of cultural events are available at the tourist office (p. 623).

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Avenida For those who want to be away from the center and don't mind a bus or taxi ride or two, this is a welcoming choice. It's in the Barrio de Begoña, near one of the major religious monuments of Bilbao, the Basílica de Begoña. The hotel was built in the late 1950s, and its small rooms, furnished in a functional modern style, are well maintained.

Zumalacárregui 40, 48006 Bilbao. www.barcelo.com. ✆ **94-412-43-00.** Fax 94-411-46-17. 189 units. 76€–190€ double; from 131€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Metro: Santutxu. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Gran Hotel Domine ★★ No other hotel in Bilbao has the whimsical design of this charmer. Facing the Guggenheim Museum, the contemporary architecture by Iñaki Aurreroextea reflects the conceptual wit of decorator Javier Mariscal. The exterior is created from polished stone, with black glass windows cantilevered out from the facade at odd angles, reflecting the architecture of Frank O. Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao. Each floor has its own color scheme, ranging from ochers to blues to reds, even such "box of chocolate" tones as vanilla, cocoa, and caramel. The less expensive interior rooms overlook a caged-rock sculpture in the central atrium, but the rooftop terrace (where breakfast is served) gives everyone a panoramic view of the Guggenheim.

Alameda de Mazarredo 61, El Ensanche, 48009 Bilbao. www.granhoteldominebilbao.com. ✆ **94-425-33-00.** Fax 94-425-33-01. 135 units. 115€–196€ double; 275€–496€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Metro: Moyúa. Bus: 38 or 48. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (50€); concierge; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD player (in some), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Carlton ★★ Returned to its former glory, this is the grande dame of all Bilbao hotels. During the Civil War, the hotel was the seat of the Basque government. The lobby, with its magnificent stained glass, sets the 1926 style (the year it opened). The spacious guest rooms are the epitome of traditional if heavy style and taste. The building has been declared a historic, artistic, and cultural monument, and the staff can have a bit of a superior attitude. The **Restaurante Carlton** serves classic Basque haute cuisine.

Moyúa Plaza 2, 48009 Bilbao. www.aranzazu-hoteles.com. ✆ **94-416-22-00.** Fax 94-416-46-28. 143 units. 87€–135€ double; 210€–275€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 24€. Metro: Moyúa. Bus: 38 or 48. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Ercilla ★ Soaring high above the buildings surrounding it in the heart of Bilbao's business district, this is a tastefully decorated bastion of attentive service and good living. The midsize to spacious guest rooms are conservative and comfortably furnished in sleek, low-key design.

Ercilla 37–39, 48011 Bilbao. www.hotelercilla.es. ✆ **94-470-57-00.** Fax 94-443-93-35. 325 units. 87€–143€ double; 199€–497€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Metro: Indautxu. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (16€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel López de Haro ★★★ This luxurious boutique hotel has more character than many modern hostelries. Behind its discreet facade of chiseled gray stone, the 1990 building is filled with English touches and features marble flooring, hardwood paneling, and design that thinks a little outside the box—mixing patterns and colors with sure-handed abandon. The comfortable midsize guest rooms contain flowered or striped upholstery, modern bathrooms, and wall-to-wall carpeting or hardwood floors.

Obispo Orueta 2–4, 48009 Bilbao. www.epoquehotels.com. ✆ **94-423-55-00.** Fax 94-423-45-00. 53 units. 78€–140€ double; from 375€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 19€. Metro: Moyúa. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.).

Meliá Bilbao ★ This hotel in the heart of the business district stands on the site of the former headquarters of the shipping industry; it's designed to evoke an ocean liner of tomorrow. Often filled with art lovers, the public rooms of the hotel are decorated with a stunning collection of modern art as well as Spanish ship models. The hotel offers midsize to spacious bedrooms furnished in a luxurious style, with all the comforts, including marble bathtubs. The bedroom views are panoramic, though the hotel doesn't approach the charm of the Gran Hotel Domine (see above).

Calle Leizaola 29, El Ensanche, 48001 Bilbao. www.melia-bilbao.com. ✆ **94-428-00-00.** Fax 94-428-00-01. 210 units. 118€–163€ double; from 279€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 23€. Metro: Moyúa. Bus: 13. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; concierge; exercise room; outdoor heated pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (15€ per 24 hr.).

Miró Hotel ★ 🎁 Fans of fashion designer Antonio Miró (the Calvin Klein of Spain) flock to his first boutique hotel, located steps from the Guggenheim. Offering old-fashioned European service in an idiosyncratic, 21st-century decor, the Miró is elegantly minimalist, contrasting black-carpeted floors and black-marble bathrooms with large splashes of light. Rooms range from compact doubles to deluxe suites. In the **Bar Miró,** you might find international art collectors and occasionally hear live jazz.

Alameda Mazarredo 77, 48009 Bilbao. www.mirohotelbilbao.com. ✆ **94-661-18-80.** Fax 94-425-51-82. 50 units. 110€–150€ double; 155€–175€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. Metro: Moyúa. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player (in some), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Iturrienea Ostatua ★★ 🎁 In the Old Quarter, this beautifully restored town house with wooden beams and 19th-century stone floors is a good bet for those seeking an authentically old-fashioned experience (read: no air-conditioning). The walls are decorated with scenes of historic Bilbao life. Two Basque sculptors, Jesus Chueca and Roberto Atance, handpicked the lighting and original furnishings. For sheer friendliness, personality, and charisma, this cozy nest has no equal. One downside: The front rooms tend to be noisy.

Santa María 14, 48005 Bilbao. www.iturrieneaostatua.com. ✆ **94-416-15-00.** Fax 94-415-89-29. 21 units. 50€–70€ double; 70€–86€ triple. DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Metro: Casco Viejo. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Sirimiri 🏷 One of the best of the inexpensive choices, this little hotel lies in a restored 19th-century building in the center of the city. Most bedrooms are rather spacious, each with a well-maintained private bathroom. Furnishings are modern and comfortable. Guests meet fellow guests in the lounge, and the staff (many of whom speak English) is one of the town's most efficient.

Plaza de la Encarnación, 48006 Bilbao. www.hotelsirimiri.es. ✆ **94-433-07-59.** Fax 94-433-08-75. 28 units. Summer 75€–100€ double; off season 63€–75€ double. AE, MC, V. Free parking. Metro: Casco Viejo. **Amenities:** Exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi (free).

17

CANTABRIA & ASTURIAS

Clinging to the northern coast of Spain as successive strips of coastal fishing villages, verdant lowlands, and high rolling hills and mountains, the autonomous regions of Cantabria and Asturias are united by geography and history. They are the core of "green Spain," flanked on the west by Galicia and the east by the Basque Country. The high peaks and ridges of the Cordillero Cantábrico capture the moisture rolling off the Atlantic, dumping it on the green fields and mountain forests of Cantabria and Asturias.

The earliest evidence of human habitation (as long ago as 140,000 years) has been found in the limestone caves of this region. When the Romans arrived they found thriving Celtic communities on the coast, and when the Moors came riding in, they were met with fierce resistance by local Visigothic warlords.

Protected by the mountains, many Christians found refuge along this northern strip during the centuries of Moorish domination of lands farther south. By tradition, the Christian Reconquest began with the 722 A.D. Battle of Covadonga, led by the warrior Pelayo, later crowned king of Asturias. A great deal of religious architecture remains in the region, including a handful of country churches in a style between Gothic and Romanesque.

This chapter begins in Cantabria and works westward toward Asturias. It is a portion of Spain best seen with a car, since connections between the coastal communities are not always convenient, and public transport is inadequate or nonexistent in the interior. **Santander,** a rail terminus and the regional capital, makes the best center for touring Cantabria; it also has the most tourist facilities. From Santander, you can get nearly anywhere in Cantabria within a 3-hour drive. To explore Asturias, the best base is its capital, **Oviedo.**

The most attractive portion of the Cordillera is the scenic and topographic summit known as the **Picos de Europa,** located mostly in Asturias but creeping over the border into Cantabria. In 1918, the region was made Spain's first national natural park.

The coastline of Asturias constitutes one of the major sightseeing attractions in northern Spain. Called the **Costa Verde** ★★, it begins in the east at the picturesque castle-topped fishing village of **San Vicente de la Barquera** in Cantabria and stretches about 120km (75 miles) to Gijón in Asturias. You can drive it without stops in 90 minutes, but allow yourself 3 hours to stop and marvel at the scenery and the villages. The western coast, beginning at Gijón, goes all the way to Ribadeo, a border town with Galicia—a distance of 180km (112 miles). This rocky coastline, studded with fishing villages and containing narrow estuaries and small beaches, is one of the most spectacular stretches of scenery in Spain. It takes all day to explore.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **World-famous Cabrales cheese for sale in Las Arenas de Cabrales.**

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN CANTABRIA & ASTURIAS

- **Visiting the tomb of Pelayo in Covadonga:** Almost lost in myth, the warrior Pelayo turned the tide of Moorish conquest in 722 and became the founder of Christian Spain. His tomb behind a waterfall in the mountains is one of the country's most sacred—and picturesque—shrines.
- **Frolicking on the Playa del Sardinero:** The chilly waters of the Atlantic may not have the balmy appeal of Mediterranean resorts, but the long sands of El Sardinero in Santander make a perfect spot for catching some rays, playing a little beach soccer, and enjoying a summer holiday.
- **Marveling at hunters' magic in ancient caves:** Only a handful of caves with prehistoric drawings remain open to public view, but it's worth the effort to visit one. The drawings of game animals seem ready to leap off the walls.
- **Enjoying street markets and folkloric dancing in Oviedo:** Asturians enjoy being Asturian, and nowhere do they celebrate that more than with folk music and dance on the streets of Oviedo. Conveniently, the summer performances often overlap with the bustling street markets.
- **Eating just-caught bonito at Castro Urdiales:** The Cantabrian coast lands some of Europe's best seafood, especially anchovies and bonito. An order of fresh bonito and a glass of wine at a harborside bar is the perfect way to enjoy the best of Spain's north coast.

SANTANDER ★

393km (244 miles) N of Madrid, 116km (72 miles) NW of Bilbao

Santander, capital city of Cantabria, has always been a rival of San Sebastián in the east, but it has never attained the premier status of that Basque resort. It did, however, become a royal residence from 1913 to 1930, after city officials presented an English-style Magdalena Palace to Alfonso XIII and his queen, Victoria Eugenia.

The ancient city of Santander was ravaged by a 1941 fire that destroyed the Old Quarter and most of its dwellings. It was rebuilt along original lines, with wide boulevards, a waterfront promenade, sidewalk cafes, shops, restaurants, and hotels.

Many visitors to Santander head for **El Sardinero ★★**, a resort less than 2.5km (1½ miles) from the city center. Buses and trolleys make the short run between downtown and the resort both day and night. Besides hotels and restaurants, Santander has three main **beaches:** Playa de Castaneda, Playa del Sardinero, and Playa de la Concha. If they become too crowded, take a 15-minute boat ride to **El Puntal,** a beautiful beach that is rarely crowded, even in August. If you don't like crowds or beaches, go up to the lighthouse, a little more than 2km (1¼ miles) from El Sardinero, where the views are wide-ranging. A restaurant serves snacks both indoors and outdoors. Here, you can hike along the green cliffs or loll in the grass.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Five to 10 daily **flights** from Madrid and Barcelona land at **Aeropuerto de Santander** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**), a little more than 6.5km (4 miles) from the town center. It's accessible by taxi and costs 20€. Much cheaper is the regular bus service that runs between the

El Sardinero beach in Santander.

airport and the train station (3€ one-way). The local office of **Iberia** is at the airport (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**).

There are three **trains** daily from Madrid (trip time: 5½–9 hr.); a one-way fare costs 47€. For national rail information, visit www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.** Santander is also served by the narrow-gauge rail company of north coastal Spain, FEVE (www.feve.es; ✆ **94-221-16-87**). Three FEVE trains per day arrive from Bilbao (trip time: 1½–2¾ hr.). A one-way fare costs 8.25€. Similar connections are available to Oviedo, Gijón, and A Coruña.

Buses arrive at Calle Navas de Tolosa (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**). There are 22 connections a day to and from Bilbao (trip time: 1½ hr.); a one-way ticket costs 12€. Six to nine buses a day arrive from Madrid (trip time: 5½ hr.), costing from 49€.

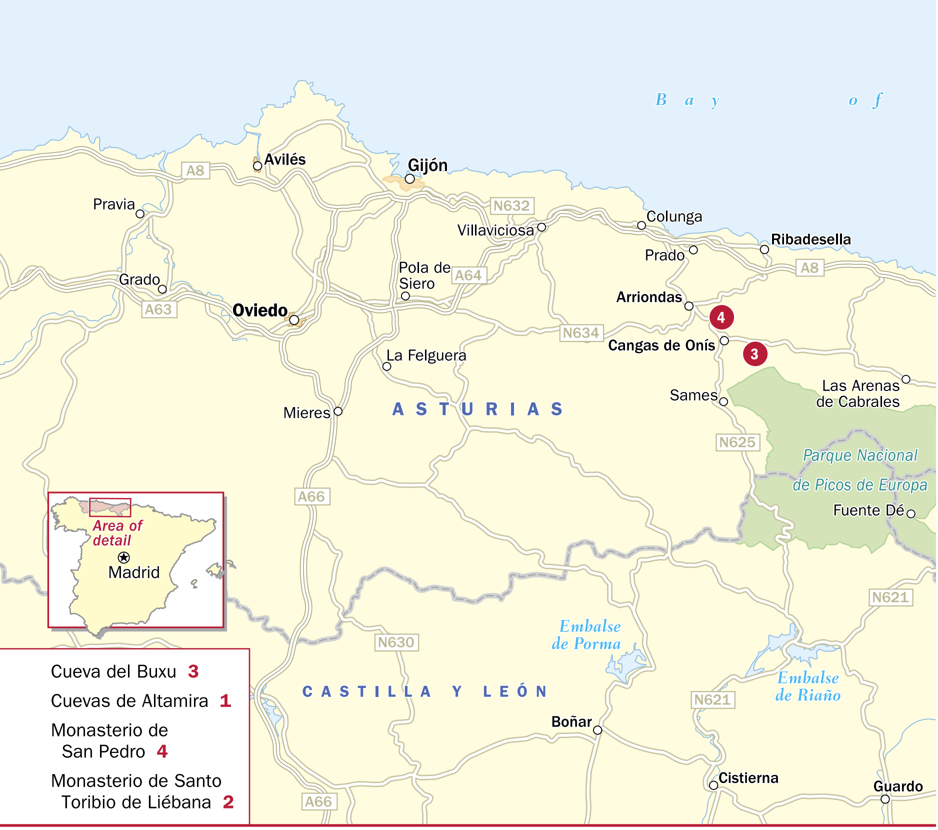
N-634 continues west from Laredo to the intersection with N-635, which you follow into Santander.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Paseo Pereda (www.ayto-santander.es; ✆ **94-220-30-00**). It's open September to June Monday to Friday 9am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm; and July to August daily 9am to 9pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS The **Music and Dance Festival** in August is one of the most important artistic events in Spain. Occasionally, this festival coincides with religious celebrations honoring Santiago (St. James), the patron saint of Spain.

Exploring Santander

Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo LIBRARY Located in the same building as the art museum, this 50,000-volume library was amassed by historian/writer Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856–1912), Santander's most illustrious man of letters, and left to Santander upon his death in 1912. Guided tours are available.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A63
Oviedo
Arriondas
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N634
Cangas de Onís
3
La Felguera
Las Arenas de Cabrales
Sames
Mieres
ASTURIAS
N625
Parque Nacional de Picos de Europa
Fuente Dé
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Area of detail
Madrid
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Embalse de Porma
N630
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
N621
Embalse de Riaño
Boñar
Cistierna
Guardo
A66
Cueva del Buxu 3
Cuevas de Altamira 1
Monasterio de San Pedro 4
Monasterio de Santo Toribio de Liébana 2

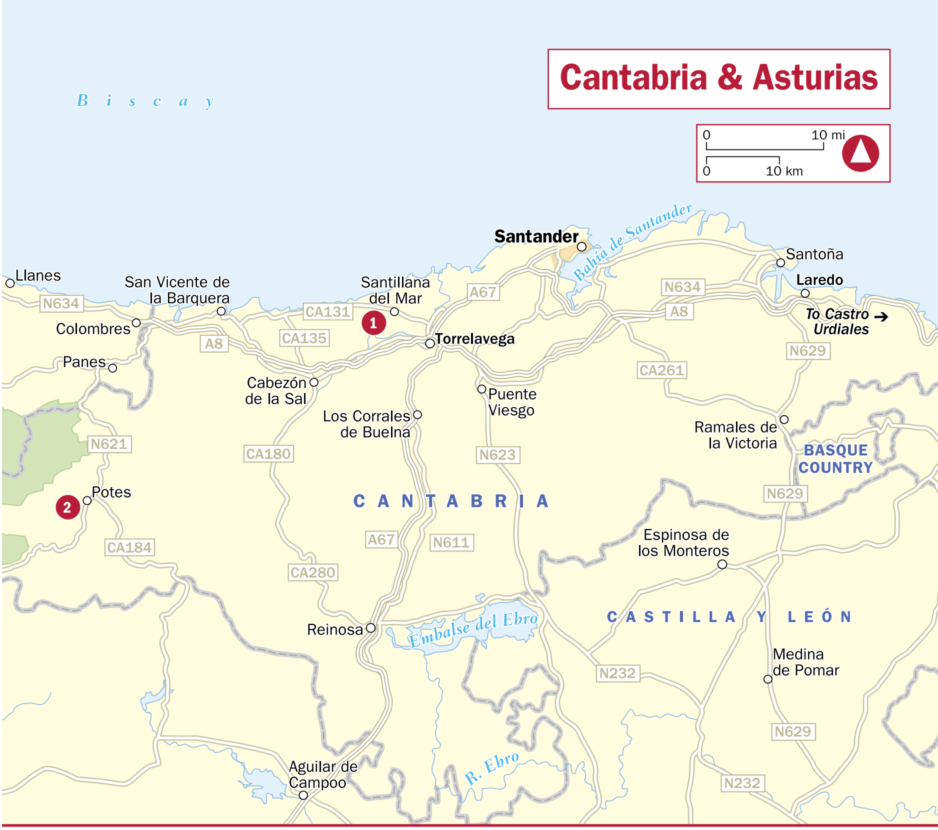
Nearby is the Casa Museo, which displays this great man's study and shows how modestly he lived.

Calle Rubio 6. www.bibliotecademenendezpelayo.org. ✆ **94-223-45-34.** Free admission. Mon–Sat 9am–1:30pm and 4:30–9pm.

Catedral CATHEDRAL Greatly damaged in the 1941 fire, this restored, fortresslike 13th-century cathedral holds the tomb of Menéndez y Pelayo (see above). The 12th-century **Capilla del Cristo** sits beneath the main church and consists of a trio of low-slung aisles that can be entered through the south portico. The Gothic cloister was restored after the fire. Roman ruins were discovered beneath the north aisle in 1983 and are visible through a glass floor.

Plaza José Equino Trecu, Somorrostro s/n. ✆ **94-222-60-24.** Free admission. Daily 10am–1pm and 4–7:30pm. Closed during Mass 11–11:30am and 6:30–7pm. Free guided visits July–Aug.

Museo de Bellas Artes de Santander ART MUSEUM Located near the Ayuntamiento (Town Hall), the Museum of Fine Arts has some interesting Goya paintings, notably his portrait of Ferdinand VII, commissioned by the city, and his series of etchings called *Disasters of War.* You can also see some of his continuing series of *Caprichos* (*Whims*). See also Zurbarán's *Mystic Scene* and an array of works by Flemish, Spanish, and Italian artists. The main focus, however, is on northern Spanish landscape painting, much of it from the 19th and 20th centuries. The museum also mounts excellent exhibitions of contemporary art.


Cantabria & Asturias
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Panes
Torrelavega
Cabezón de la Sal
Los Corrales de Buelna
Puente Viesgo
Ramales de la Victoria
BASQUE COUNTRY
Potes
CANTABRIA
Espinosa de los Monteros
CASTILLA Y LEÓN
Reinosa
Embalse del Ebro
Medina de Pomar
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Calle Rubio 6. www.museosdesantander.com. ✆ **94-223-94-85.** Free admission. June 16–Sept 14 Mon–Fri 11:15am–1pm and 5:30–9pm, Sat 10:30am–1pm; Sept 15–June 15 Mon–Fri 10am–1pm and 5:30–9pm, Sat 10am–1pm.

Museo de Prehistoria y Arqueología de Cantabria MUSEUM This museum has some interesting artifacts discovered in the Cantabrian province—not only Roman but unusual prehistoric finds. You will not be able to visit the actual Cuevas de Altamira (p. 646), but you can see objects and photographs from these prehistoric caves with their remarkable paintings. Some of the items on display date from 15,000 years ago.

Calle Casimiro Sáinz 4. www.museosdecantabria.com. ✆ **94-220-71-09.** Free admission. June 16–Sept 16 Tues–Sat 10am–1pm and 4–7pm, Sun 11am–2pm; Sept 17–June 15 Tues–Sat 9am–1pm and 4–7pm, Sun 11am–2pm.

Museo Maritimo del Cantábrico ★★ ☺ MUSEUM Hunkering down along the shore between the main ferry docks and the sandy municipal beaches, this recent museum is part aquarium, part history museum, and part state-of-the-art maritime education center. While the interactive exhibits are particularly good for children, they're also very effective at teaching adults about the Cantabrian fisheries and the region's 3,000-year history as a major shipping port—a go-between for the Iberian Peninsula and northern Europe. Long before the ferries started disgorging British tourists at Santander's dock, the medieval Irish, English, and French were getting their fish here.

Calle San Martín de Bajamar s/n. www.museosdecantabria.com. ✆ **94-227-49-62.** Admission 6€ adults, 4€ ages 4–12. May–Sept daily 10am–7:30pm; Oct–Apr Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. Bus 1–4, 7, 13.

Shopping

True aficionados of pottery and the nuances of ceramics usually drive from Santander to **Santillana del Mar,** 29km (18 miles) away, where handcrafted ceramics are in great abundance. But if you want to stay in Santander's city limits and see a pared-down version of what's available in Santillana del Mar, head for any of the retailers on the Calle Arrabal, in the city's commercial center.

An antiques gallery well stocked with old furniture and paintings with rich veneers is **Fundación Marcelino Botín,** Calle Pedrueca 1 (www.fundacionmbotin.org; ✆ **94-222-60-72**). Ironically, many of Santander's boutiques and stores aren't in the city at all but within a 50-unit shopping center 3km (1¾ miles) from town, beside the road leading to the airport. Check out the **Centro Comercial ValleReal** (www.centrovallereal.com), Carretera Bilbao Km 2.

Where to Eat

Many Santander visitors dine at their hotels or boardinghouses, which can offer good value and convenient service. For variety, however, below are a few suggestions.

Bodega del Riojano SPANISH Dating from the 1500s, this was once a wine cellar, the evidence of which can still be seen today in its time-blackened wooden beams and old tables. Locals call the bodega the "Round Museum" (Museo Redondo) because of its display of paintings on the ends of old wine barrels. Since 1940, this has been a favorite local tavern for both food and drink. Dishes are frequently changed on the menu—in fact, they're adjusted daily, and there are major seasonal variations. Always reliable fresh fish can be grilled or baked to your specifications. Succulent pork chops also come from the grill. One of the best dishes likely to be featured is sweet red peppers stuffed with ground beef. The desserts are homemade daily.

Río de la Pila 5. www.bodegadelriojano.com. ✆ **94-221-67-50.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–22€; set menus for 4 people 29€–46€. AE, MC, V. July–Aug daily 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight; Sept–June Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight, Sun 1:30–4pm.

El Serbal ★★★ CANTABRIAN The market leader of all restaurants in the area is this citadel of elegance and fine cuisine prepared with market-fresh ingredients. The chef aims for upscale professionalism and meets his mark. Against a backdrop of contemporary design, the menu features delectable items that make choosing difficult. The sirloin of venison served with foie gras, peaches, and blueberry sauce is a standout. You might also enjoy the ox sirloin roasted with fresh rosemary and served in a port-wine sauce. Baked skate appears with black olives, and monkfish is grilled to perfection and served with cuttlefish-laced noodles. The sumptuous desserts are made fresh daily.

Calle Andrés del Río 7. www.restaurantesdesantander.es. ✆ **94-222-25-15.** Reservations required. Main courses 20€–24€; tasting menu 58€, or 82€ with wine. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Feb 1–2. Bus: 7.

Zacarías ★★ 🎁 CANTABRIAN Zacarías Puente Herboso is the most locally famous chef in Santander. Although he's a geologist by profession, his fascination with gourmet food led to his opening this first-class restaurant. As a well-known food writer, he is the local authority on Cantabrian recipes, and here he puts his spatula where his pen is by showcasing the flavors of the Cantabrian coast and countryside. Try his fisherman's stew, a delectable kettle made with *merluza* (hake), clams, and potatoes. His *alubias rojas* (red beans with sausage) is another favorite. Enjoying local renown is *guiso pescadores:* boiled potatoes sautéed in garlic, olive oil, onion, fresh parsley, and red chili peppers. Nothing is quite as alluring as his *manganos encebollados,* or calamari and caramelized onion. Most main courses are at the low to middle range of prices noted below. From time to time in the off season, the chef also offers cooking classes.

Hernán Cortés 38. www.restaurantezacarias.com. ✆ **94-221-23-33.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–12:30am.

Entertainment & Nightlife

The most exciting thing to do in the evening is head for the gaming tables of the **Gran Casino Sardinero,** Plaza de Italia (www.grancasinosardinero.es; ✆ **94-227-60-54**), which has a cover charge of 3€. It's open daily from 8pm to 4am; be sure to bring your passport for entry.

Where to Stay In & Around Santander

Santander is loaded with good-value hotels, from year-round city hotels to summer villas at El Sardinero. It gets crowded, especially in July and August, so try to reserve well in advance. Parking is readily available at or near any of the hotels listed.

IN TOWN

Abba Santander Hotel 🏷 Steps from the rail station, this budget bet in the heart of the city is ideal for those without transportation. The hotel has been a Santander tradition since 1923. The exterior may not be too enticing, but the atmosphere improves inside this family-operated inn. Although it's in a congested area, street noises are minimal thanks to well-insulated windows. The midsize guest rooms, well cared for and comfortably furnished, are often in the old-fashioned style of northern Spain, with glassed-in balconies and high ceilings. Breakfast is offered in a formal room with Queen Anne chairs and oak wainscoting.

Calderón de la Barca 3, 39002 Santander. www.abbasantanderhotel.com. ✆ **94-221-24-50.** Fax 94-222-92-38. 37 units. 59€–171€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 12€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (6€ per hr., in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Bahía ★★ Even though it's not on the beach, this hotel, with style and personality, is the best place in all of Santander to lay your head at night. An antique building with a colonial aura has been given a new lease on life after extensive modernization. Surrounded by century-old pine gardens and palms, it lies near Pagurea Beach. Modern decor and old-style furniture combine to form a harmonious whole, with many original and contemporary paintings adorning the walls. Each room opens onto a small terrace. A creative, Mediterranean-influenced cuisine is based on quality, market-fresh ingredients, the best in any season.

Av. Alfonso XIII, no. 6. www.hotelbahia.com. ✆ **94-220-50-00.** 188 units. 81€–160€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Central 🎁 This hotel with a blue Beaux Arts facade was built around 1900 and is one of the most attractive and ornate in its neighborhood. Inside, the hotel is known for its original decor and cozy atmosphere. The rooms are midsize and done in a comfortable modern style, with many cozy, homelike touches like bedside reading lamps and armchairs. The location is about a block from the Plaza Fortificada and the sea-fronting Jardines de Pereda.

General Mola 5, 39004 Santander. www.elcentral.com. ✆ **94-222-24-00.** Fax 94-236-38-29. 41 units. 50€–148€ double; 80€–160€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 13€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Ciudad de Santander ★ About 8 blocks north of Santander's busiest seaside promenade (Paseo de Pereda) in the center of the city's commercial and shopping heartland, this white-sided five-story rectangular hotel dates from 1989. A big-windowed lobby here has marble floors, honey-colored wooden paneling, and modern accessories. The midsize rooms are monochromatic like the lobby, with convenient writing desks.

Menéndez Pelayo 13–15, 39006 Santander. www.nh-hotels.com. ✆ **94-231-99-00.** Fax 94-221-73-03. 62 units. 64€–132€ double; 145€–204€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€ indoors; 9.50€ outdoors. Bus: 5. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (13€ per 24 hr.).

AT EL SARDINERO

Hotel Real ★★★ This grande dame is the most splendid and luxurious hotel in El Sardinero. Architecturally noteworthy—it was the first building in the region constructed of reinforced concrete—the Real was built in 1917 to house the entourage of courtiers who accompanied King Alfonso XIII on his midsummer vacations to Santander. Purchased and completely renovated by the prestigious HUSA chain, it is once again one of the most elegant hotels in northern Spain, filled with updated reminders of a more gracious age. Located about 3km (1¾ miles) east of the commercial center of town, near the site of the Royal Palace on a hillside above Magdalena Beach, the Real contains richly conservative and spacious rooms, most with views of the sea. The hotel also has a thalassotherapy spa center, with treatments beginning at 28€.

Paseo Pérez Galdós 28, 39005 Santander. www.hotelreal.es. ✆ **94-227-25-50.** Fax 94-227-45-73. 123 units. 120€–350€ double; from 450€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 1, 2, 5, or 7. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Las Brisas 🎁 A mansion from the 1920s, this building has been successfully converted into a well-run family-style hotel by Teresa and Jesús García, the friendly and hospitable owners. It's an upmarket cottage-style hotel opening onto the often chilly waters of northern Spain. Las Brisas features rooms in a wide range of sizes, from singles to family-size duplexes. Flowery curtains and blankets and dark-wood furniture predominate. Try for one of the units with views over the water. The cozy breakfast room is a snug retreat.

Calle la Braña 14, 39005 Santander. www.hotellasbrisas.net. ✆ **94-227-50-11.** Fax 94-228-11-73. 13 units. 44€–130€ double; 75€–150€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Palacio del Mar One of the city's most modern hotels dates from the mid-1990s, when it was built near the beach at El Sardinero, a short drive north of Santander's commercial core. The decor features a sinuous series of postmodern lines that might have been inspired by a Joan Miró painting, accented with winding staircases and walls made from glass blocks. Many of the units are spacious suites, each with comfortable and contemporary-looking furniture, three phone extensions, and cheerful upholstery.

Av. de Cantabria 5, El Sardinero, 39012 Santander. www.hotel-palaciodelmar.com. ✆ **94-239-24-00.** Fax 94-239-22-20. 67 units. 56€–127€ double; 237€–345€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; access to nearby health club; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

LAREDO

60km (37 miles) W of Bilbao, 48km (30 miles) E of Santander, 427km (265 miles) N of Madrid

To an American, "the streets of Laredo" means the gun-slinging Old West. To a Spaniard, it means an ancient maritime town on the eastern Cantabrian coast that is now a major summer resort, with hundreds of apartments and villas along its 5km (3 miles) of beach. Playa de la Salvé is to the west and Playa de Oriñón is to the east.

The medieval quarter, **Puebla Vieja,** retains the traditional atmosphere of Laredo. It was walled on the orders of Alfonso VIII of Castilla, who wanted to protect the town from pirate raids along the coast. The hillside **Iglesia de la Asunción,** dating from the 13th century, overlooks the harbor. It has five naves and rather bizarre capitals.

Laredo's Puebla Vieja.

If you're driving west to Santoña, note the big monument honoring native son Juan de la Cosa, the cartographer who sailed with Columbus on his first voyage to America.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Bilbao, head west along the coastal highway (identified at various points as the A-8 or the E-70), and follow the signs to Laredo. From Santander, take the N634 east and follow signs.

Bus service is available from both Bilbao and Santander. The station is in the town center at Av. de José Antonio s/n (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**). There are at least 18 buses per day coming into Laredo from Bilbao, and as many as 26 per day coming into Laredo from Santander. Travel time to Laredo from Bilbao is 40 minutes, and the one-way fare is 3.85€. Travel time from Santander is 45 minutes, and the one-way fare is 3.80€.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Alameda de Miramar s/n (www.laredo.es; ✆ **94-261-10-96**), is open July 1 to September 15 daily 9am to 9pm. The rest of the year, hours are daily 9:30am to 1:30pm and 4 to 7pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS On the last Friday of August, the annual **Battle of Flowers** draws thousands of visitors to watch bloom-adorned floats parade through the Old Town.

Where to Stay & Eat

Restaurante el Ancla CANTABRIAN/SEAFOOD Set on the lobby level of the Hotel el Ancla, this restaurant/bistro offers a stylish and very appealing decor, a view of a pleasant garden, and traditional Cantabrian seafood. Fish comes fresh from the local fishing boats; a consistent specialty includes *lubina* (sea bass) slow-cooked in a salt crust wherein the white flesh of the fish is served flaky and flavorful, and almost devoid of the "fishy" smell that turns off a lot of carnivores. Expect a crowd of visiting business travelers, with a scattering of locals who appreciate the traditional ambience and the cuisine. The smartly modern guest rooms have been updated more recently than old-fashioned nautically themed public areas. The hotel forms a horseshoe around a pretty garden in a fine residential neighborhood, yet it's just a block from the long sands of Playa Salvé. Half-board can be a very good deal here, especially in low season (rates are 74€–135€ double).

Calle González Gallego 10, 39770 Laredo. www.hotelelancla.com. ✆ **94-260-50-30.** Fax 94-261-16-02. Restaurant reservations not necessary. Main courses 13€–30€. Tues–Sat 1:30–4:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm.

Risco ★ SEAFOOD On a hillside overlooking the town, .8km (½ mile) southeast of the center, this is Laredo's most appealing restaurant, known for innovative seafood dishes. It is also an acceptable hotel. The chef prepares such items as marinated salmon with pink peppercorns, scrambled eggs with lobster, and peppers stuffed with minced pigs' trotters or crabmeat. For dessert, try a fresh-fruit sorbet. Some tables are set up in the hotel garden, or you can dine in a traditional room with views of the sea. The 25 guest rooms are simple and functionally furnished, clean and comfortable with neat bathrooms (85€–105€ double, 113€–134€ suite; rates include continental breakfast).

La Arenosa 2, 39770 Laredo. www.hotelrisco.com. ✆ **94-260-50-30.** Fax 94-260-50-55. Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–26€; *menú del día* 18€. Tues–Sun 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 8:30–11pm.

Side Trips from Laredo

CASTRO URDIALES ★

Just 22km (14 miles) east of Laredo on the A-8/E-70, Castro Urdiales has almost twice the charm of Laredo with half the number of visitors. The medieval fort converted to a lighthouse and the 13th-century Gothic **Santa María** church (open only for services) lend a medieval air to this one-time whaling port that remains a major fishing center for hake, bonito, and anchovies. (Some of the world's best white anchovies are canned here.) After climbing the fortress and clambering over the breakwater, explore the bars and restaurants around the port. For a sample of the spectacular seafood, have any of at least 100 fish tapas at

Following Gaudí

The town of Comillas lies 49km (30 miles) to the west of Santander and only a short drive to the west of Santillana del Mar. Its major attraction is **El Capricho de Gaudí,** Barrio de Sobrellano (www.elcaprichodegaudi.com; ✆ **94-272-03-65**), the summer palace of Gaudí (pictured), the fabled Catalán architect, who designed this structure in the Mudéjar Revival style. The tile-covered villa was built in 1883. Visits to El Capricho are available from 11am to 3pm for school groups and, by arrangement, for tour groups. Otherwise, enjoy the exterior and the little jewelbox of a formal restaurant (✆ **94-272-03-65**). Main dishes are 16€ to 22€. The town also has the *modernisme* **Palacio de Sobrellano** (✆ **94-272-03-39**) and **La Capilla Panteón,** designed by Catalán architects Joan Martorell and Josep Llimona y Agapit Vallmitjana, respectively, in the late 1870s. The exteriors are updated Gothic buildings—the magical modern details are all inside. Admission to the palace and chapel is 3€ each. They are open solely for guided tours Tuesday to Sunday 9:30am to 2:30pm and 3:30 to 6pm. The **town cemetery gates** (above the main beach) are a *modernisme* masterpiece created in 1893 by Lluis Doménech i Montaner.

Marisquería Alfredo (✆ **94-286-36-43**), Calle Santa María 2. Tapas are priced 2€ to 5€, while main dishes are 5€ to 30€. Alfredo is open Wednesday to Monday 1pm to midnight. Castro Urdiales also has three long sandy beaches for swimming and sunbathing.

SANTILLANA DEL MAR ★★

29km (18 miles) SW of Santander, 393km (244 miles) N of Madrid

Among the most perfectly preserved medieval villages in Europe, the Cantabrian town of **Santillana del Mar** is now a famous Spanish national landmark. A monastery houses the relics of Santa Juliana, a martyr in Asia Minor who refused to surrender her virginity to her husband. The name Santillana is a contraction of "Santa Juliana." The "del Mar" is misleading, as Santillana is not on the water but inland.

Jean-Paul Sartre called Santillana "the prettiest village in Spain," and we wouldn't want to dispute his esteemed judgment. In spite of all the tour buses, Santillana retains its medieval atmosphere and is very much a village of dairy farmers to this day.

Wander on foot throughout the village, taking in its principal sites, including **Plaza de Ramón Pelayo** (sometimes called Plaza Mayor). Here the Paradores de Santillana (p. 645) have been installed in the old Barreda Bracho residence.

A 15th-century tower, facing Calle de Juan Infante, is known for its pointed arched doorway. A walk along **Calle de las Lindas** (Street of Beautiful Women) may not live up to its promise, but it does include many of the oldest buildings in Santillana and two towers dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. Calle del Río gets its name from a stream running through town to a central fountain.

Santillana del Mar was the traditional base for visiting the **caves of Altamira** (p. 646), which contain some of the most famous Stone Age paintings in the world. The caves, however, have been closed to protect them, although you can visit an amazing facsimile.

Essentials

GETTING THERE **La Cantábrica** (✆ **94-272-08-22**) operates four to seven **buses** a day from Santander, but cuts back to four between September and June. Trip time is 45 minutes, and a one-way fare costs 7€. If you're driving, take the N-611 out of Santander to reach the C-6316 cutoff to Santillana.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Av. Escultor Jesús Otero 20 (www.santillana-del-mar.com; ✆ **94-281-88-12**). It's open daily 9:30am to 1:30pm and 4 to 7pm.

Exploring Santillana

Visit the 800-year-old cathedral, **Colegiata de Santa Juliana ★**, Calle Santo Domingo (✆ **94-281-80-04**), which shelters the tomb of the village's patron saint, Juliana, and walk through its ivy-covered cloister. Among the treasures displayed are 1,000-year-old documents and a 17th-century Mexican silver altarpiece. It's open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 7:30pm. In winter, it closes at 6:30pm. The 3€ admission includes the Convent of Las Clarisas (the Poor Clares).

At the other end of the main street, the 400-year-old Convento de Regina Coelí, also called the **Convento de las Clarisas (Convent of the Poor Clares;** Museo Diocesano; ✆ **94-281-80-04**), houses a rich art collection inspired by a Madrid art professor who encouraged the nuns to collect and restore religious paintings and statues damaged or abandoned during the Spanish Civil War. The collection is constantly expanding. The convent is open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 8pm (until 6:30pm in winter).

Where to Eat

Dining is not a compelling reason to visit Santillana del Mar. Most visitors eat in the hotels.

Restaurante Altamira CANTABRIAN The restaurant is housed in a series of dining rooms known for regional specialties. Nonguests of the hotel often visit for a taste of Cantabrian cuisine with an emphasis on freshly caught seafood. The decor is rustic, the service casual and polite, and the food fresh and well prepared. Catch of the day could easily be turbot served with a vinaigrette sauce and fresh tomatoes. Oven-roasted sea bass with fresh thyme is another good choice. Meat eaters should try the local Cantabrian hot pot, called *cocido montañes*. It is a stew of beans, white cabbage, and pork ribs, bacon, and sausage.

In the Hotel Altamira, Calle Cantón 1. www.hotelaltamira.com. ✆ **94-281-80-25.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–22€; fixed-price menus 14€–17€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:15–4pm and 8–11pm.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Casa del Marqués ★★ This *antigua casa sensorial* (old manor house) is the second-best place to stay in town. It houses you in style, comfort, and atmosphere in the heart of town near Plaza Mayor. The present building stands on the foundation of a manor dating from the 12th century. Dripping with antiquity, the building has its original stone walls. The midsize guest rooms are furnished comfortably but with a kind of rustic decor to honor the building's long history. From the terraces or balconies of the hotel, panoramic views unfold.

Cantón 26, 39330 Santillana del Mar. ✆/fax **94-281-88-88.** 15 units. 86€–131€ double; 126€–156€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 12€. Closed Jan–Mar. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Santillana Gil Blas/Parador de Santillana del Mar ★★ The best places to stay in town are at either of these two *paradores.* Although they occupy the same address, they are two different hotels, each with 28 units. The more expensive, with more elaborate rooms, is the Parador de Santillana Gil Blas, followed by the Parador de Santillana del Mar. The hotels share parking and the Plaza de Ramón Pelayo, but Gil Blas occupies the more prestigious of the 400-year-old palaces, while the other *parador* has the more updated rooms. In truth, it's hard to go wrong with either. Both are filled with antiques and have hand-hewn plank floors, chandeliers, and refectory tables. Large portraits of knights in armor hang in the main gallery of Gil Blas. Most guest rooms are unusually large, with antiques and windows on two sides, some with views of a garden. Top-floor rooms in the Parador de Santillana del Mar are much smaller, but also much less expensive.

Plaza de Ramón Pelayo 11, 39300 Santillana del Mar. www.parador.es. ✆ **94-202-80-28** for Parador de Santillana Gil Bas; ✆ **94-281-80-00** for Parador de Santillana del Mar. Fax 94-281-83-91 for both *paradores.* 56 units. Santillana del Mar: 70€–161€ double; 172€–188€ suite. Santillana Gil Blas: 78€–166€ double; 218€–297€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Casa del Organista 🎁 This 18th-century stone chalet keeps a low profile in the heart of the Old Town, about 2 blocks past the two *paradores.* Most of the three-story structure has retained its original architecture, including wooden balconies and thick wooden beams evocative of a mountain house. Guest rooms are midsize, furnished with wood headboards under beamed ceilings.

Calle Los Hornos 4, 39330 Santillana del Mar. www.casadelorganista.com. ✆ **94-284-03-52.** Fax 94-284-01-91. 14 units. 60€–93€ double. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Altamira Perhaps not as impressive as the *paradores,* this in-town lodging occupies a 200-year-old former palace. Its comfortable, well-maintained rooms often absorb the *paradores'* overflow. Two units have private lounges. The restaurant is one of Santillana's better choices.

Calle Cantón 1, 39330 Santillana del Mar. www.hotelaltamira.com. ✆ **94-281-80-25.** Fax 94-284-01-36. 32 units. 62€–104€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 5€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C (in some), TV, hair dryer.

Hotel Siglo XVIII 🎁 This small, cozy nest a 5-minute walk from the Old Town has operated since 1996 in an old building behind a stone facade. Inside, the decor is cozy and homelike, with a lingering aura of the 18th century, dominated by carved wood, high-beamed ceilings, white walls, and tiled floors. The guest rooms, some of which have balconies, are midsize with plenty of comfort and light.

Revolgo 38, 39330 Santillana del Mar. www.hotelsigloxviii.com. ☎ **94-284-02-10.** Fax 94-284-02-11. 16 units. 70€–77€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

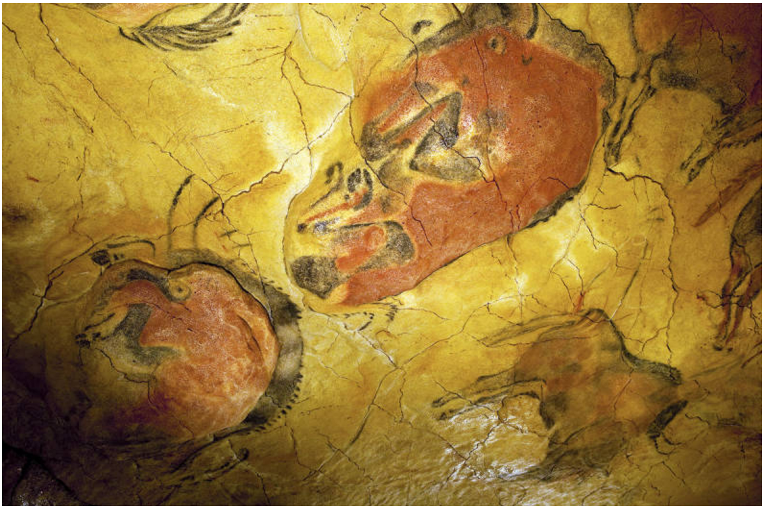
Los Infantes A comfortable choice, although not as charming as the Hotel Altamira, this hotel occupies an 18th-century building on the main road leading into the village. The beamed ceilings and lounges furnished with tapestries, antiques, and paintings maintain the flavor of old Santillana. The small rooms are cozy and well kept, with wall-to-wall carpeting; two have balconies.

Av. L'Dorat 1, 39330 Santillana del Mar. www.hotel-santillana.com. ☎ **94-281-80-11.** Fax 94-284-01-03. 28 units. 56€–94€ double; 92€–127€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Side Trips from Santillana

THE ALTAMIRA CAVES ★★

About 2.5km (1½ miles) from Santillana del Mar are the **Cuevas de Altamira,** famous for prehistoric paintings dating from the end of the Ice Age. The cave paintings at Altamira are ranked among the finest prehistoric paintings ever discovered, and, as a result, they are often called the "Sistine Chapel of prehistoric art." These ancient depictions of bison and horses, painted vividly in reds and blacks on the caves' ceilings, were not discovered until the late 19th century. Once their authenticity was established, scholars and laypersons alike flocked to



Cave paintings at Altamira.

Cave Painters from 15,000 Years Ago

Altamira is not the only ancient cave in the region. At Puente Viesgo you can visit **El Castillo ★★**, found at Carretera N623 Km 28, 27km (17 miles) from Santander (✆ **94-259-84-25**). Lying in a medieval hamlet in the Pas Valley, this cave was excavated under the 350m (1,150-ft.) peak of the mountain, Monte del Castillo. Decorated by artists 15,000 years ago, the cave has several different sections. Admittedly, the art is not as advanced or concentrated as the works found at Altamira (and you're experiencing the original, not reproductions), but seeing the handprints, the clan marks, and the graceful images of deer, bison, and horses that must have seemed to dance in the flicker of firelight could make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Small groups enter with a guide and must stay close, even in some of the palace-sized chambers. The caves are open April to October Tuesday to Sunday 9am to noon and 3 to 6:30pm; November to March, hours are Wednesday to Sunday 9am to 2pm. Admission is 3€ for adults and 1.50€ for kids 4 to 12. Since numbers of visitors are strictly limited, save yourself some heartache by reserving admission at a particular date and time at **http://cuevas.culturadecantabria.com**.

see these works of art, which provide a fragile link to our remote ancestors. Severe damage was caused by the bacteria brought in by so many visitors, so now the Research Center and Museum of Altamira no longer allows visitors.

The **Museo de Altamira ★★** (http://museodealtamira.mcu.es; ✆ **94-281-80-05**) is located a few hundred feet from the original caves. On exhibit are perfect replicas of Altamira's main chambers, complete with precisely realistic copies of the original murals. The replica was created by computerized digital-transfer technology; the so-called "neocave" contains every crack and indentation of the original. The highlight is the array of 21 red bison in the **Polychrome Chamber.** Museum exhibits also explain, as much as possible, the lives of the people who left behind this art. The museum is a first-rate facility—it's hard to imagine how it could be improved—but the experience does lack the magic of seeing the real thing.

If you don't have a car, you have to walk from Santillana del Mar, as there is no bus service. From spring to fall, however, it's a pretty stroll past long green pastures filled with milk cows contentedly chewing their cud. From May to October, museum hours are Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 8pm and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm. November to April, hours are Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 6pm and Sunday 9:30am to 3pm. Admission is 3€ for adults, 1.50€ for students, and free for those 18 and under and seniors 65 and over. Admission is free to all on Saturday and Sunday after 2:30pm. The center is closed January 1 and 6, May 1, and December 24, 25, and 31.

LOS PICOS DE EUROPA ★★★

Potes: 114km (71 miles) W of Santander, 398km (247 miles) N of Madrid. Cangas de Onís: 147km (91 miles) W of Santander, 419km (260 miles) N of Madrid

These mountains are technically part of the Cordillera Cantábrica, which runs parallel to the northern coastline of Spain. The narrow green band known as Los Picos de Europa is clearly the most dramatic segment.

These "European Peaks" are the most famous and most legend-riddled mountains in Spain. Rising more than 2,590m (8,500 ft.), they are not high by alpine standards, but their proximity to the sea and sheer vertical drop makes their height all the more impressive. The ancient Romans constructed a north-south road whose stones are still visible in some places, but during the Middle Ages, the mountains were passable only with great difficulty. The abundance of wildlife (including some endangered species), the dramatic rocky heights, and the medieval battles that took place in the hills have all contributed to the legends and myths of the principality of Asturias.

Covering a distance of only 39km (24 miles) at their longest point, Los Picos are geologically and botanically different from anything else in the region. Thousands of years ago, glaciers carved the uplifted limestone karst to create massive and forbidding cliffs which today challenge some of the most intrepid rock climbers in Europe.

As you tour the Picos de Europa, be on the lookout for some of the rarest **wildlife** remaining in Europe. On the beech-covered slopes of these mountains and in gorges laden with jasmine, you might spot the increasingly rare Asturcón, a shaggy, rather chubby wild horse so small it first looks like a toy pony. Another endangered species is the Iberian brown bear—but if you see one, keep your distance. The park is also home to the sure-footed chamois goat, rare butterflies, peregrine falcons, buzzards, and golden eagles. All wildlife is strictly protected by the government.

If you **hike** in this region, make sure you're well prepared. Many of the slopes are covered with loosely compacted shale, making good treads on hiking boots a must. Inexperienced hikers should stick to well-established paths. In summer, the weather can get hot and humid, and sudden downpours sweeping in from the coastline are common in any season. Hiking is not recommended between October and May.

By far the best way to see this region is **by car.** Most drivers arrive in the region on the N-621 highway, heading southwest from Santander, or on the same highway northeast from the cities of northcentral Spain (especially León and Valladolid). This highway connects many of the region's best vistas in a straight line. It also defines the region's eastern boundary. If you're driving east from Oviedo, you'll take the N-632, in which case the first town of any importance will be Cangas de Onís.

Travel by bus is much less convenient but possible if you have lots of time. The region's tourist hubs are the towns of Panes and Potes; both have bus service (two buses per day in summer, one per day in winter) from Santander and León (one bus per day in summer). The same buses come to Panes and Potes from the coastal town of Unquera. From Oviedo, there are two buses daily to the district's easternmost town of Cangas de Onís; they continue a short distance farther southeast to Covadonga. Within the region, a small local bus runs once a day, according to an erratic schedule, along the northern rim of the Picos, connecting Cangas de Onís with Las Arenas.

Exploring the Picos de Europa

If you have a car, the number and variety of tours in this region are almost endless, but for this guide, the region is divided into three driving tours that form a loop. Any of them, with their side excursions, can fill an entire day; if you're rushed and omit some of the side excursions, you can spend a half-day.

DRIVING TOUR 1: PANES TO POTES ★★

DISTANCE: **29km (18 miles); 45 minutes**

Except for one optional detour, this drive extends entirely along one of the region's best roads, N-621, which links León and Valladolid to Santander. The drive is most noteworthy for its views of the ravine containing the Deva River, a ravine so steep that direct sunlight rarely penetrates it.

About two-thirds of the way to Potes, signs point you on a detour to the village of:

1 Liébana

This village is .8km (½ mile) off the main road. Here you'll find the church of **Nuestra Señora de Liébana,** built in the 10th century in the Mozarabic style. Some people consider it the best example of Arabicized Christian architecture in Europe, with Islamic-inspired geometric motifs. If it isn't open, knock at the door of the first house you see as you enter the village; it's the home of the guardian, who will unlock the church if she's around. For this, she will expect a tip. If she's not around, content yourself with admiring the church from the outside.

Return to N-621 and continue another 5.6km (3.5 miles) to Tama. Watch for turnoff to Centro de Visitantes de Sotama.

2 Centro de Visitantes Sotama

This state-of-the-art **visitor center** (www.mma.es; ✆ **94-273-81-09**) is filled with life-size photos and striking sound effects that bring the mountains of the Picos de Europa alive. You will feel like you are hiking the trails and encountering the wildlife. The excellent section on cave life makes the Ice Age seem like yesterday. The center is open daily 9am to 6pm (July–Aug until 8pm). Admission is free.

Continue another 3.4km (2 miles) to reach the village of:

3 Potes

This is a charming place with well-kept alpine houses against a backdrop of jagged mountains.

Three kilometers (1¾ miles) southwest of Potes, near Turiano, stands the:

4 Monasterio de Santo Toribio de Liébana

The monastery dates from the 17th century, but has been restored to the transitional Romanesque style it enjoyed at the peak of its vast power. It contains what is reputed to be a splinter from the True Cross, brought from Jerusalem in the 8th century by the bishop of Astorga. The monastery is also famous as the former home of Beatus de Liébana, the 8th-century author of *Commentary on the Apocalypse,* one of Spain's most famous ecclesiastical documents. Ring the bell during daylight hours, and one of the brothers will let you enter if you are properly attired.

At the end of a 19km (12-mile) winding and beautiful road to the west of Potes is the:

The slopes of Fuente Dé.

5 Parador de Fuente Dé

You can spend the night here (p. 655) or just stop for lunch. The drive following the path of the Deva River for the most part will take you to:

6 Fuente Dé

Only a few hundred meters beyond the *parador,* a ***teleférico***, the third-largest cable-car system in the world (www.cantur.com; ✆ **94-273-66-10**), carries you 800m (2,625 ft.) up to an observation platform above a wind-scoured rock face. The cable car operates July to August daily 9am to 8pm, September to June daily 10am to 6pm. A one-way fare costs 9.20€; round-trip is 15€. At the top you can walk 5km (3 miles) along a footpath to the rustic **Refugio de Aliva** (✆ **94-273-09-99**), open between June and September 15. Double rooms cost 75€. If you opt for just a meal or a snack at the hostel's simple restaurant, remember to allow enough time to return to the *teleférico* before its last trip down.

DRIVING TOUR 2: POTES TO CANGAS DE ONÍS ★

DISTANCE: **85km (53 miles); 2 hours**

This tour includes not only the Quiviesa Valley and some of the region's most vertiginous mountain passes, but also some of its most verdant fields and most elevated pastures. You might stop at an occasional village, but most of the time you will be going through deserted countryside. Your route will take you through several tunnels and high above mountain streams set deep into gorges. The occasional belvederes along the way always deliver on their promise of panoramic views.

The village of Potes (see "Driving Tour 1," above) is your starting point. Take N-621 southwest to Riaño. At Riaño, turn north for a brief ride on N-625. Then take a winding route through the heart of the region by driving northwest on N-637. Although it's beautiful all along the way, the first really important place you'll reach is:

1 Cangas de Onís

This is the westernmost town in the region, where you can get a hotel room and a solid meal after a trek through the mountains. It serves as base camp for many hiking and climbing expeditions into the mountains and has a wealth of guides and outfitters along its main street. The biggest attraction in Cangas de Onís is an ivy-covered **Roman bridge,** lying west of the center, spanning the Sella River. Also of interest is the **Capilla de Santa Cruz,** immediately west of the center. One of the earliest remaining Christian sites in Spain, it was originally constructed in the 8th century over a Celtic dolmen and rebuilt in the 15th century.

About 1.5km (1 mile) northwest of Cangas de Onís, beside the road leading to Arriondas, stands the:

2 Monasterio de San Pedro

This is a Benedictine monastery in the village of **Villanueva.** The church that you see was originally built in the 17th century, when it enclosed the ruins of a much older Romanesque church. It has some unusual carved capitals showing the unhappy end of the medieval King Favila, supposedly devoured by a Cantabrian bear.

The Roman bridge of Cangas de Onís.

DRIVING TOUR 3: CANGAS DE ONÍS TO PANES ★★

DISTANCE: **56km (35 miles); 1 hour**

This tour travels along the relatively straight C-6312 from the western to the eastern entrance to the Picos de Europa region. A number of unusual excursions can easily stretch this into an all-day outing.

From Cangas de Onís (see "Driving Tour 2," above), head west about 1.6km (1 mile). You'll reach the turnoff to:

1 Cueva del Buxu

Inside the cave are a limited number of prehistoric rock engravings and charcoal drawings, somewhat disappointingly small. Only 25 people per day are allowed inside (respiration erodes the drawings). It's open Wednesday to Sunday at 10:30 and 11:30am, and 12:30, 3:15, and 4:15pm. Advance reservation is essential and must be made by telephone (✆ **60-817-54-67** from 3–5pm Wed–Sun). Admission is 3€ adults, 1.50€ ages 7 to 12 and over 65.

Some 6.5km (4 miles) east, signs point south in the direction of:

2 Covadonga

Revered as the birthplace of Christian Spain, Covadonga is about 9.5km (6 miles) off the main highway. A battle here in A.D. 722 pitted a ragged band of Christian Visigoths against a small contingency of Muslim soldiers. The resulting victory established the first niche of Christian Europe in Moorish Iberia, and the leader of the Goths, Pelayo, was crowned king. The town's most important monuments are **La Santa Cueva ★★**, a cave containing the sarcophagus of Pelayo (d. 737), king of the Visigothic Christians, in a slot tomb; and an enormous neo-Romanesque basilica, built between 1886 and 1901, commemorating the Christianization of Spain. At the end of the long boulevard that funnels into the base of the church stands a statue of Pelayo.

The basilica at Covadonga.

Return to the highway and continue east. You'll come to the village of Las Estazadas; then after another 11km (6¾ miles) you'll reach:

3 Las Arenas de Cabrales

Note that some maps refer to this town simply as Arenas. This is the headquarters of a cheese-producing region whose Cabrales, a blue-veined cheese

La Santa Cueva, built into the rock.

Wheels of Cabrales cheese.

made from ewes' milk, is avidly consumed throughout Spain. Stop at any of the bars here to sample some Cabrales with the local hard cider. You can also see how it is made in the exhibition center at the **Cueva del Queso** ★, Barrio Pares s/n (✆ **98-584-51-23**). The Cueva is open May through August 10am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, September to April on weekends only. Tours begin quarter after the hour and cost 4.50€ adults, 2€ children.

Drive 5km (3 miles) south from Arenas, following signs to the village of:

4 Puente de Poncebos

This is shown on some maps simply as Poncebos. This village is several miles downstream from the source of Spain's most famous salmon-fishing river, the Río Cares, which flows through deep ravines from its source near the more southerly village of Cain.

Beginning at Poncebos, a footpath has been cut into the ravine on either side of the Río Cares. It is one of the engineering marvels of Spain, known for centuries as the **Divine Gorge.** It crosses the ravine many times over footbridges and sometimes through tunnels chiseled into the rock face beside the water, making a hike along the banks of this river a memorable outing. You can climb up the riverbed from Poncebos, overland to the village of Cain, a total distance of 11km (6¾ miles). Allow between 3 and 4 hours. At Cain, you can take a taxi back to where you left your car in Poncebos if you don't want to retrace your steps.

After your trek up the riverbed, continue your drive to the village of:

5 Panes

This village lies at a distance of 23km (14 miles), to the eastern extremity of the Picos de Europa.

Where to Stay & Eat

Lodging options are extremely limited in these mountain towns outside of Cangas de Onís. If you're planning an overnight stop, make sure you have a reservation. Most taverns will serve you food during regular opening hours without a reservation.

Directly north of Cangas de Onís, the unprepossessing little village of Arriondas has not one but two Michelin-starred restaurants. Nowhere in the Picos de Europa area can you dine so well.

IN ARRIONDAS

Casa Marcial ★★★ CONTEMPORARY ASTURIAN This is one of the great restaurants along the northern coast of Spain, an unexpected discovery in this remote pueblo. Chef Nacho Manzano creates a superlative cuisine in an antique farmhouse fronting rolling green foothills. After the rib-sticking heavy dishes of northern Spain, it's a delight to encounter some of his lighter fare, like an icy cucumber soup poured around a sorbet made of green pepper with swirls of virgin green olive oil poured over it. From the Río Stella comes a salmon served in a "pool" of melon gazpacho with fresh asparagus. Manzano can take any quotidian dish and turn it into a masterpiece—for instance, he braises locally raised chicken until it assumes a deep mahogany hue.

Carretera AS-342, La Salgar 10, 4.5km (2¾ miles) north of Arriondas. www.casamarcial.com. ✆ **98-584-09-91.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–42€; fixed-price menus 44€–85€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sat 1–4pm and 9–11:30pm; Sun 1–4pm. Closed 5 weeks in Jan–Feb (dates vary).

El Corral del Indiano ★★★ CONTEMPORARY ASTURIAN Chef José Antonio Campo Viejo lures some of Europe's greatest gastronomes to this gem of a restaurant at the foot of Los Picos de Europa. However, this is no rustic mountain tavern. Modernist tableware adorns the stiff white tablecloths, which are set off against electric-blue walls. Although the chef draws inspiration from Asturian tradition, he infuses every one of his sensational dishes with his own culinary creativity. Main courses are expensive; it's a better value to order the tasting menu. A sweet, briny soup might combine fresh clams with just-picked green peas, resulting in a velvety taste that makes you wish it were June year-round. Many local homes cook smoked sausages and beans, but no kettle is better than the one simmering on Viejo's stove. His *pote asturiano,* a blend of cabbage and pig parts, is a quintessential version of the dish. It's hard to tell whether one of his concoctions—a bonbon of Cabrales cheese and roasted apple inside a shell of barely sweet white chocolate—should be an appetizer or a dessert!

Av. de Europa 14. www.elcorraldelindianu.com. ✆ **98-584-10-72.** Reservations required. Main courses 20€–34€; tasting menu 75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Fri–Sat and Mon–Tues 1:30–4pm and 9–11pm; Wed and Sun 1:30–4pm.

IN CANGAS DE ONÍS

Hotel Aultre Naray ★ 🎁 A small hotel with character, this establishment is in an Asturian country house dating from 1873. Its robust masonry work is typical of the 19th century, and the entrance has a beautiful stone archway. The decor came from an interior-design workshop in Madrid, resulting in a harmonious blend of traditional architecture with current design trends. The hotel has well-furnished, midsize guest rooms, each with a tiled bathroom. There's a cozy sitting room with a fireplace for guests. The hotel is in the foothills of the Escapa mountain range and enjoys a panoramic view of the mountains and an oak forest on the banks of the Río Sella. The area is a perfect place for fishing; hiking in the mountains and canoeing are other popular diversions.

Cangas de Onís s/n, Peruyes, 33547 Asturias. www.aultrenaray.com. ☎ **98-584-08-08.** Fax 98-584-08-48. 10 units. 70€–100€ double; 113€–163€ family room for 4. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Wi-Fi (free). *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

La Palmera CANTABRIAN When the weather is right, you can dine outside here, enjoying mountain air with the food. Sometimes this place is overrun, but on other occasions you can have a meal in peace. The menu features game from the surrounding mountains, along with filet of beef, lamb chops, and salmon in green sauce. Try the local mountain cheese. La Palmera is 3km (1¾ miles) east of Cangas de Onís on the road to Covadonga.

Soto de Cangas s/n, La Rotunda. ☎ **98-594-00-96.** Main courses 12€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Wed–Mon 10am–11pm. Closed Aug.

IN COSGAYA

Hotel del Oso This well-run little hotel in the valley of Liébana is located in two buildings next to the Río Deva, beside the road leading from Potes to the *parador* and cable car at Fuente Dé. The "Hotel of the Bear" is ringed with natural beauty. Its small rooms are well furnished and maintained. Meals are taken at the Mesón del Oso (main courses 10€–24€; daily 1–3:45pm and 9–10:45pm; closed Jan 7–Feb 15), which serves generous portions of Lebaniega cuisine, reflecting the bounty of mountain, stream, and sea. Try trout from the Río Deva, grilled bonito, or a mountain stew called *cocida lebaniego,* whose recipe derives from local lore and tradition. Dessert might be a fruit-based tart. There's an outdoor terrace.

Carretera Potes–Fuente Dé, Km 14, 39582 Cosgaya. www.hoteldeloso.com. ☎ **94-273-30-18.** Fax 94-273-30-36. 50 units. 71€–85€ double. MC, V. Free parking. From Potes, take the road signposted to Espinama 15km (9⅓ miles) south. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; outdoor pool; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

IN FUENTE DÉ

Parador de Fuente Dé ★★ The finest place to stay in the area, this thoroughly renovated modern mountain lodge lies at the end of the major road through the Liébana region. Hunters in autumn and mountain climbers in summer often fill its attractively decorated and comfortably furnished guest rooms, which are midsize to spacious. It is virtually across the street from the Fuente Dé *teleférico.*

At Km 3.5 de Espinama, 39588 Fuente Dé. www.parador.es. ☎ **94-273-66-51.** Fax 94-273-66-54. 78 units. 105€–128€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Dec–Feb. Drive 26km (16 miles) west of Potes. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

GIJÓN

473km (294 miles) N of Madrid, 192km (119 miles) W of Santander, 29km (18 miles) E of Oviedo

The major port of Asturias and its largest city is a summer resort and an industrial center rolled into one. As a port, Gijón (pronounced Hee-*hohn*) is said to predate the Romans. The Visigoths ruled here, and in the 8th century the Moors wandered through, but never took possession of the area.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Gijón doesn't have an airport, but **Iberia** flies to the airport at Santiago del Monte, Ranón (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**), 42km (26 miles) away, a facility it shares with Oviedo-bound passengers.

Gijón has good rail links and makes a good gateway into Asturias. **RENFE trains** (www.renfe.com; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) arrive from Madrid in 6 to 7 hours; the one-way trip costs 50€. There is also service from Oviedo (see the following section) every 30 minutes during the day on **FEVE** (www.feve.es). The trip takes 35 minutes from Oviedo to Gijón; a one-way ticket costs 13€.

There is frequent **bus service** (✆ **90-242-22-42** for information). Fifteen buses per day arrive from Madrid, taking 5½ hours and costing 49€ one-way. There is also service from Bilbao at the rate of 10 buses per day; the one-way trip takes 5 hours and costs 27€. Service is every hour from Oviedo; the one-way trip takes only an hour and costs 2.20€.

Driving from Santander in the east, head west along the N-634. At Ribadesella, you can take the turnoff to the N-632, the coastal road to Gijón. This is the scenic route. To save time, continue on N-634 until you reach the outskirts of Oviedo, and then cut north on A-66, the express highway to Gijón.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Calle Rodríguez San Pedro (www.gijon.info; ✆ **98-534-17-71**). It's open in summer daily 10am to 10pm, and off season daily 10am to 2:30pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS The most exciting time to be in Gijón is on **Asturias Day,** the first Sunday in August. This fiesta is celebrated with parade floats, traditional folk dancing, and lots of music. But summers here tend to be festive even without a festival. Vacationers are fond of patronizing the *chigres* (cider taverns), eating grilled sardines, and joining in singalongs in the portside *tascas*. Be aware that cider is more alcoholic than beer and can get you drunk before you know it.

Exploring Gijón

The most interesting quarter of Gijón is the barrio of **Cimadevilla,** with its maze of alleys and leaning houses. This fishermen's village, on a peninsula jutting into the ocean to the north of the new town, spills over an elevated piece of land known as Santa Catalina. Santa Catalina forms a headland at the west end of the **Playa San Lorenzo.** Stretching for about 2.5km (1½ miles), this sandy beach has good facilities. After time at the beach, you can stroll through **Parque Isabel la Católica,** at its eastern end.

Gijón is short on major monuments. The city was the birthplace of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744–1811), one of Spain's most prominent men of letters, as well as an agrarian reformer and liberal economist. Manuel de Godoy, the notorious minister, ordered that Jovellanos be held prisoner for 7 years in Bellver Castle on Mallorca. In Gijón, his birthplace has been restored and turned into the **Museo-Casa Natal de Jovellanos,** Plaza de Jovellanos (www.jovellanos.net; ✆ **98-518-51-52**), open July to August Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 1:30pm and 5 to 9pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm; September to June, hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 5 to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm. Admission is free.

You can also visit the **Termas Romanas,** or Roman Baths, at Campos Valdés (http://museos.gijon.es; ✆ **98-534-51-47**), which are underground at the end of the Old Town, opening onto Playa de San Lorenzo. Discovered in 1903, these baths are now fully excavated, and the town has opened a museum here. Near the baths are reconstructed parts of the old Roman wall. The baths are open July to August Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 1:30pm and 5 to 9pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm and 5 to 8pm. From September to June they are open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1pm and 5 to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm. Admission is 3€, or free for children 15 and under; it's free to all on Sundays.

After viewing the baths, you'll find yourself at **Playa San Lorenzo,** the city's best beach, which attracts sunbathers from the surrounding area. ***Tip:*** If this beach is too crowded, you can find more remote beaches strung along the bases of some cliffs farther on. The beaches here are more rock strewn, however, and the surf is rougher.

Where to Eat

Casa Tino ★ 🏷 ASTURIAN Good home cooking at a great price is reason enough to seek out this friendly family-run restaurant near the police station, north of Manuel Llaneza and west of Paseo de Begoña. Each day the chef prepares a different stew—sometimes fish and sometimes meat. The daily menu is the same every week—a veritable succession of Spanish comfort food dishes like pig's knuckles with fried potatoes, baked eggs in a spicy tomato sauce, grilled ham steak, meatballs in gravy, and so on. Every evening, the place is packed with chattering diners, many of them regulars. If you don't order the daily special, try Asturian white beans stewed with pork, a rich fish chowder with large pieces of hake, or marinated beefsteak. Then finish with a fruit tart.

Alfredo Truan 9. www.restaurantecasatino.com. ✆ **98-513-84-97.** Main courses 6€–18€; *menú del día* 9.75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Fri–Wed 1:15–3:30pm and 8:45–11:30pm. Bus: 4 or 11.

Casa Víctor SEAFOOD Owner and sometime-chef Víctor Bango is a bit of a local legend who personally oversees the buying and preparation of the fresh fish for which his eponymous restaurant is famous. Well-heeled young professionals of Gijón enjoy the tavernlike atmosphere here, as well as the imaginative dishes—a mousse made from the roe of sea urchins, for example. Well-chosen wines accompany other more classic dishes such as stewed octopus served with fresh vegetables, or grilled swordfish. Just as you'd want for a seafood restaurant, Casa Víctor is on the working docks.

Carmen 11. www.casavictor.com. ✆ **98-535-00-93.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–25€; fixed-price dinner 45€, lunch 18€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Sat 1–3:30pm and 8:30–11pm; Tues 8:30–11pm. Closed mid-Dec to mid-Jan. Bus: 10.

El Puerto ★★ CANTABRIAN Set directly on the waterfront, with very large windows that overlook the fishing boats and pleasure craft bobbing at anchor in the nearby harbor, this restaurant is Gijón's special-occasion dining spot. Sheathed in hardwood paneling and accented with glittering crystal ornaments and lighting fixtures, it specializes in an upscale market cuisine based on very fresh fish, most of which was hauled out of nearby waters within a few hours of its preparation. An enduring, if slightly over the top, specialty is sliced hake served with lobster claws, clams, and green sauce. Excellent starters include the terrine of foie gras with grapes, and crepes stuffed with spider crab. The main tables are on street level, but auxiliary seating is available on the floors immediately below and above.

Calle Claudio Alvarogonzález s/n. ✆ **98-534-90-96.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 9pm–midnight. Closed Easter week. Bus: 10.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Hotel Hernán Cortés This is Gijón's top downtown hotel, located about 1 block east of Plaza del 6 de Agosto, midway between Playa San Lorenzo and the harbor. Thoroughly renovated, the style is nonetheless a bit stiff and dull, but the rooms are fairly large and have a panoply of amenities, like shoeshine equipment. The Cortés doesn't have a restaurant, but the proprietors will serve you lunch or dinner in your room from a neighboring restaurant.

Fernández Vallín 5, 33205 Gijón. www.hotelhernancortes.es. ✆ **98-534-60-00.** Fax 98-535-56-45. 60 units. 65€–145€ double; 135€–205€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 9.50€–15€. Bus: 4 or 11. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Parador de Gijón (Parador Molino Viejo) ★ ☺ Next to the verdant confines of Gijón's most visible park, about .8km (½ mile) east of the town center and an easy walk from the popular San Lorenzo beach, this is probably the best spot in town for tourists who want local color. It was constructed around the core of an 18th-century cider mill. The *parador* is surrounded by a garden strewn with tables, beside a stream sheltering colonies of swans. The reception area is sheathed in marble and the unpretentious restaurant and separate cider bar are quite popular with local residents, especially on weekends. Guest rooms are small and simple, but strike an Asturian note with their wooden floors, thick shutters, and traditional furniture.

Parque Isabel la Católica s/n, 33203 Gijón. www.parador.es. ✆ **800/223-1356** in the U.S., or 98-537-05-11. Fax 98-537-02-33. 40 units. 70€–168€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 4 or 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; children's center; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel Begoña Centro This functional, modern hotel offers small rooms that are well furnished and comfortable, plus efficient chamber service to keep everything clean. Regional and national dishes, with many seafood concoctions, are served in the restaurant. The hotel is on the southern outskirts of the new town, 1 block north of Avenida Manuel Llaneza, the major traffic artery from the southwest.

Av. de la Costa 44, 33205 Gijón. www.hotelesbegona.com. ✆ **98-514-72-11.** Fax 98-539-82-22. 250 units. 49€–64€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 13€. Bus: 4 or 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi (free).

La Casona de Jovellanos ★ 🎁 This venerable hotel was built on foundations 3 centuries old, on the rocky peninsula that was the site of the oldest part of fortified Gijón, a short distance south of Parque Santa Catalina. It contains only a few rooms, so reservations are imperative. The small rooms are attractively furnished and well maintained. In 1794, the writer Jovellanos established the Asturian Royal Institute of Marine Life and Mineralogy here, and it was later transformed into this hotel, within walking distance of the beach and yacht basin.

jurassic park IN ASTURIAS

Dinosaur buffs from around the world flock to one of the most extensive dinosaur museums in the world, **Museo del Jurásico de Asturias ★★★**, San Juan de Duz at Colunga (www.museojurasicoasturias.com; ✆ **90-230-66-00**), 32km (20 miles) east of Gijón and 40km (25 miles) northeast of Oviedo. The 209km (130-mile) stretch of sandy beaches and towering cliffs along this coast have produced so many dinosaur bones that the area is dubbed the "Dinosaur Coast." In all, 800 fossils, representing dinosaurs that inhabited the earth 65 million to 280 million years ago, are displayed in a trio of large exhibition spaces. The bones are presented in life-size versions, and the museum itself is built in the shape of a big hoof print. Admission is 7€ adults, 4.60€ children 4 to 11 and seniors 66 and up; it's free on Wednesdays. From June 19 to September 12, hours are daily 10:30am to 2:30pm and 4 to 8pm. Off-season visits are possible Wednesday to Sunday 10:30am to 2:30pm and 4 to 7pm.

Plaza de Jovellanos 1, 33201 Gijón. www.lacasonadejovellanos.com. ✆ **98-534-12-64.** Fax 98-535-61-51. 13 units. 54€–81€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 14€. Bus: 4 or 11. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* TV, fax, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

OVIEDO ★★

203km (126 miles) W of Santander, 444km (276 miles) N of Madrid

Oviedo is the capital of Asturias. Only 26km (16 miles) from the coast, the city is very pleasant in summer, when much of Spain is unbearably hot. It makes an ideal base for excursions along the Costa Verde. Despite its high concentration of industry and mining, the area has unspoiled scenery.

Razed in the 8th century during the Reconquest, Oviedo was rebuilt in an architectural style known as Asturian pre-Romanesque, which predated many of the greatest achievements under the Moors. Remarkably, this architectural movement was in flower when the rest of Europe lay under the black cloud of the Dark Ages.

As late as the 1930s, Oviedo was suffering violent upheavals. An insurrection in the mining areas on October 5, 1934, led to a seizure of the town by miners, who set up a revolutionary government. The subsequent repression by General Francisco Franco and his Moroccan troops led to a bloodbath and the destruction of many historical monuments. The cathedral was also damaged, and the university was set on fire. Even more destruction came during the Spanish Civil War, when Falangist forces held an uprising in the city and withstood a 3-month siege by Republicans.

For all its brutal past, Oviedo today is a lyrical and upbeat little city, with an impressive Old Quarter and a new section that is filled with parks and fine boulevards with restaurants and boutiques.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Oviedo doesn't have an airport. The nearest one is at Santiago del Monte, Ranón, 52km (32 miles) away, which it shares with Gijón-bound passengers. Call ✆ **98-512-75-00** for information.

RENFE (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**) offers three **trains** per day from Madrid; the one-way trip takes 9 hours and costs 50€. **ALSA** (www.alsa.es; ✆ **90-242-22-42**) operates **buses** from Madrid; the trip one-way takes 5 hours and costs 31€. Driving from the east or west, take N-634 across the coast of northern Spain. From the south, take N-630 or A-66 from León.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Plaza de La Constitución 4 (✆ **98-408-60-60**). Regular hours are daily from 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7pm; from July to September hours are daily 9:30am to 7:30pm.

Exploring Oviedo

Oviedo has been rebuilt into a modern city around Campo de San Francisco, a large green park, but the historical and artistic monuments still cluster along the stone streets and plazas of the Old Quarter. The **Catedral de San Salvador ★**, on the Plaza de Alfonso II el Casto (✆ **98-522-10-33**), is the most important landmark. The original church—now little more than the foundation—dates to the 8th century, but the Gothic cathedral was begun in 1348 and completed at the end of the 15th century (except for the spire, which dates from 1556). Inside is an altarpiece in the florid Gothic style, dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. The cathedral's 9th-century **Cámara Santa (Holy Chamber)** is famous for the Cross of Don Pelayo, the Cross of the Victory, and the Cross of the Angels, the finest specimens of Asturian art in the world. The pieces show the continuing evolution of the already highly sophisticated goldsmithing of the Visigoths. Admission to the cathedral is free, but entrance to the Holy Chamber is 2€ for adults, 1€ for children ages 10 to 15, and free for children 9 and under. For 3.50€ for adults and 2€ for children, you can buy a package ticket to also visit the cathedral museum and the Gothic cloister. Both are open July to September Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm, and Saturday 10am to 6pm. Off season, they're open Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm and 4 to 7pm, and Saturday 4 to 6pm. Take bus no. 1.

From the cathedral plaza, walk down Calle Rúa, which becomes Calle Cimadeville. It leads into the boxed-in square called **Plaza Constitución,** where the Ayuntamiento (town hall) makes the square the secular counterpart to the cathedral plaza. Calle de Fierro leads past the fresh market to **Plaza del Fontán** and adjacent **Plaza Daoíz y Vélarde.** Bagpipe and folk troupes often perform here during tourist season (May–Sept), and on Thursdays a vigorous street market takes over the squares. A **flea market** of antiques and collectibles sets up shop on Sundays.

Vicky Cristina Oviedo

Writer-director Woody Allen and Oviedo (the romantic getaway city in his 2008 film *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*) seem to have a mutual admiration society. In 2002, the Principality of Asturias, where Oviedo is the capital, awarded Woody the Premio Principe de Asturias de Las Artes (the Prince's Prize for the Arts). In accepting the award, Woody called Oviedo "delicious, exotic, pretty, clean, and agreeable." The Asturians liked that so much that they ordered a life-size bronze statue of the actor/director/author/comedian striding down Calle Uria in his characteristic slump.

Santa María del Naranco and a view of Oviedo.

Standing above Oviedo, on Monte Naranco, are two of the most famous examples of Asturian pre-Romanesque architecture. **Santa María del Naranco ★★** (www.santamariadelnaranco.blogspot.com; ✆ **98-529-56-85**), originally a 9th-century palace and hunting lodge of Ramiro I, offers views of Oviedo and the snowcapped Picos de Europa. Once containing baths and private apartments, it was converted into a church in the 12th century. Intricate stonework depicts hunting scenes, and barrel vaulting rests on a network of blind arches. The open porticoes at both ends were architecturally 200 years ahead of their time. From April to September, the church is open Sunday and Monday 9:30am to 1pm, and Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 1pm and 3:30 to 7pm. Off-season hours are Sunday and Monday 10am to 1pm, and Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 12:30pm and 3 to 4:30pm. Admission is 3€ and includes admission to San Miguel de Lillo. Entrance is free on Monday.

About 90m (295 ft.) away is **San Miguel de Lillo ★** (www.santamariadelnaranco.blogspot.com; ✆ **98-529-56-85**). It, too, was built by Ramiro I as a royal chapel and was no doubt a magnificent specimen of Asturian pre-Romanesque architecture until 15th-century architects marred its grace. The stone carvings that remain, however, are exemplary. Most of the sculptures have been transferred to the archaeological museum in town. The church is open the same hours as Santa María del Naranco (see above). Ask the tourist office for its 45-minute walking tour from the center of Oviedo to the churches.

Where to Eat

Casa Conrado ASTURIAN Almost as solidly established as the cathedral nearby, this restaurant offers good-tasting, hearty Asturian stews, seafood platters, seafood soups, several preparations of hake (including one cooked in cider), veal scallopine with a champagne sauce, and a full range of desserts. It is a local favorite and a long-established culinary tradition. The service is attentive.

Argüelles 1. www.casaconrado.com. ✆ **98-522-39-19.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 13€–22€; fixed-price menu 21€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Closed Aug. Bus: 1.

Casa Fermín ★ ASTURIAN Easily the best classical Asturian fine dining in Oviedo, this venerable institution near the university and the cathedral dates from 1924. Casa Fermín was one of the pioneers in elevating Asturian home cooking—some of the most rustic in all of Spain—into a haute cuisine to rival the fancy restaurants of the Cantabrian and Basque coasts. To order the most classic dish, ask for *fabada asturiana*—the baked beans and pork dish for which the region is famous. Here those pork bits are not just salty lardons of fatback, but also include cubes of Avilés ham and nodules of blood sausage. Hake braised in cider is always a good option, and venison is available during the wild game season (Oct–Mar). This is a restaurant where the linens are indeed linen and the waiters are dressed to the nines. (Don't show up in shorts and a T-shirt.) If you're in the mood for a splurge that matches the classy surroundings, order the filet mignon with foie gras and truffle sauce. For dessert, try the province's traditional Cabrales cheese.

Calle San Francisco 8. www.casafermin.com. ✆ **98-521-64-52.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–26€; fixed-price menus 36€–65€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Bus: 1 or 2.

El Fontán ★ 🏷 ASTURIAN It's no secret to Spaniards that some of the best dining, at least when it comes to simple dishes, is available at bars and restaurants associated with the community's fresh food market. That simple truth is immediately evident here in Oviedo, where every dish at El Fontán is fresh and local. The bargain-priced daily menu tosses in a half bottle of wine (usually Galician or Basque) with a rib-sticking *pote Asturiana* (white beans, kale, potatoes, and two to three kinds of sausage) or a big serving of roasted catch of the day with boiled potatoes and fresh vegetables.

Calle Fierro 2. ✆ **98-522-23-60.** Reservations not available. Main dishes 11€–23€; *menu del día* 10€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 9am–8pm.

El Raitán ASTURIAN This restaurant south of the cathedral offers six fixed-price menus per day. The food is distinctly Asturian (the menu brags that all the recipes come from the chef's grandmother) while all the wines come from La Rioja. (It is much cheaper to order Asturian cider instead.) A large array of well-prepared choices is available for each course. Each day the chef presents about 10 classic regional dishes that change with the season. These might include hake cooked in cider or veal sirloin in a Cabrales cheese sauce, or even wild boar stew. The crab bisque makes an excellent starter. The tavern setting with overhead beams is atmospheric and intimate. The biggest shortcoming is that the establishment caters to large groups, including bus tours. If you're in the mood for some sausage, cheese, and a pint of cider, visit the tapas bar, where you can get away with a light lunch for under 10€.

Trascorrales 6. www.elraitan.es. ✆ **98-521-42-18.** Reservations recommended. Fixed menus 24€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Sat 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Sun 1–4pm. Bus: 1 or 2.

Shopping

Serious shoppers know that Oviedo offers some of Spain's best outlets for handbags and shoes. For a number of the finest boutiques, head for the intersection of **Uria** and **Gil de Jaz.** In this district, and on adjoining side streets, you'll find some of the country's best-known designer boutiques, selling the same merchandise that often fetches higher prices in Madrid and Barcelona. You'll also come across good sales on Asturian ceramic ware. The Sunday flea market on **Plaza Daoíz y Vélarde** tends to focus on small items—everything from vintage jewelry to mid-20th-century cameras. The market operates from 10am to 2:30pm.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Meliá Hotel de la Reconquista ★★ Perhaps best known now as the romantic hotel featured in Woody Allen's film *Vicky Cristina Barcelona,* the Reconquista is a grand and gracious property despite its combative and rather unfortunate name. (Oviedo and Asturias have a proprietary attitude about the holy war to retake Spain from the Moors, since they were the only ones to fight back in 722 when the rest of the Iberian Peninsula had capitulated.) Originally built from 1754 to 1777 as an orphanage and hospital, the Reconquista was converted into a luxury hotel in 1973. The interior boasts a combination of modern and reproduction furniture, as well as a scattering of ecclesiastical paintings and antiques. The spacious guest rooms are outfitted in antique styles, with views of the Old Town or of a series of elegantly antique interior courtyards. The hotel is 2 blocks north of the largest park in the town center, Campo San Francisco.

Gil de Jaz 16, 33004 Oviedo. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **98-524-11-00.** Fax 98-524-60-11. 142 units. 129€–189€ double; 289€–743€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 24€. Bus: 1, 2, or 3. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD (in some), hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

INEXPENSIVE

Hotel El Magistral In the commercial district of Uria, this six-story hotel was built in 1997. The modern design in the public areas is dominated by glass and chrome with spot lighting and tiled floors. The midsize guest rooms are more traditional, with parquet floors and pastel walls. The hotel's restaurant is about 50m (165 ft.) from the main building and has a fine reputation locally for its regional cuisine.

Calle Jovellanos 3, 33003 Oviedo. www.elmagistral.com. ✆ **98-520-42-42.** Fax 98-521-06-79. 34 units. 46€–80€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Bus: 1 or 2. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C (in some), TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Vetusta ★ 🎁 In the center of the city, just a 5-minute walk from the cathedral, this four-story hotel takes its name from an imaginary fictional city invented by the author Clarín. It has been in operation since 1997, following the successful renovation of an old structure of wood and brick, split by wooden balconies. The interior has steel-and-wood fittings and is done in an ultracontemporary style. The small guest rooms are very compact but comfortably furnished. Some have balconies, and eight contain a hydromassage.

Calle Covadonga 2, 33002 Oviedo. www.hotelvetusta.com. ✆ **98-522-22-29.** Fax 98-522-22-09. 16 units. 60€–107€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 10€. Bus: 1 or 2. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Room Mate Marcos ★ This modern hotel in the Old Quarter has the tasteful modern decor for which the Room Mate chain has become known. The small guest rooms are comfortable, inviting, and well maintained, including the bathrooms with restored plumbing. The hotel stands right in the middle of the historic district, within walking distance of many attractions. The delicious buffet breakfast is available unto noon, in case you had a typically Spanish late night.

Calle Caveda 23, 33002 Oviedo. www.room-matehotels.com. ✆ **98-522-72-72.** Fax 98-522-80-18. 47 units. 56€–80€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 10€. Bus: 1, 2, or 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

18

GALICIA

ARIÑO
GROVE

Extending above Portugal in the northwest corner of Spain, Galicia is a rain-swept land of grass and granite, much of its coastline gouged by fjordlike inlets. It is a land steeped in Celtic tradition—in many areas its citizens, called Galegos, speak their own language (not a dialect of Spanish but a separate language, Galego) closely akin to Portuguese. Galicia consists of four provinces: A Coruña (including Santiago de Compostela), Pontevedra, Lugo, and Orense. Although much of the region is mountainous interior, Galicia is famous across Europe for its fisheries, including the extremely expensive *percebes* (goose barnacles) and its swordfish catch. Some of its most important exports are canned anchovies and tins of shellfish.

The Romans made quite an impression on the region. The walls around the city of **Lugo** and the Tower of Hercules at **A Coruña** are part of that legacy. The Moors came, too, and did a lot of damage along the way. But finding the natives none too friendly and other battlefields more promising, they moved on.

Nothing did more to put Galicia on the tourist map than **Camino de Santiago,** the route of religious pilgrims. It is the oldest, most traveled, and most famous route in continental Europe. To guarantee a place in heaven, pilgrims journeyed to the supposed tomb of Santiago (St. James the Apostle), patron saint of Spain. They trekked across the Pyrenees by the thousands, risking their lives in transit. The Camino de Santiago contributed to the development and spread of Romanesque art and architecture across Spain and provided a rallying point for Christian armies to expel Muslim conquerors. Pilgrimages to the shrine may have declined since medieval times, but there's been a significant uptick in the waning years of the 21st century. More than 140,000 people make the trek each year.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN GALICIA

- **Watching pilgrims arrive in Santiago:** Most of them have tramped across Spain from France, and they reach the cathedral with a combination of exuberant relief, utter exhaustion, and a twinge of regret that the journey is done. Hours later, after a hot shower and change of clothes, they turn almost giddy.
- **Driving A Costa da Morte:** The grisly name notwithstanding, the Coast of Death has some of the most rugged and beautiful coastal scenery in Spain. At the westernmost point, Cabo de Fisterra does lives up to its name: It feels like the end of the earth.
- **Sampling the white wines of the Rías Baixas:** Perfectly matched to the fish and shellfish of the Galician coast, the best white wines of the Rías Baixas are acidic, full-bodied whites made from Albariño grapes. Their fruity qualities make a perfect counterpoint to toothy swordfish.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **A fishing boat in O Grove.**

- **Looking into the sea at A Coruña's Aquarium:** The ocean is so key to Galician identity that some Galegos insist that they bleed seawater if they're cut. A Coruña's state-of-the-art aquarium not only explains the sea—it has a window wall that looks into the underwater harbor.
- **Exploring the Old Quarter of Pontevedra:** Frozen in the 17th century, the old stone buildings, colonnaded squares, and cobbled alleyways of Pontevedra's Old Quarter conjure up its glory days as Galicia's leading port—until its river silted in.

A CORUÑA ★

604km (375 miles) NW of Madrid, 155km (96 miles) N of Vigo

Although A Coruña is an ancient city, it has very few historical and architectural monuments. Celts, Phoenicians, and Romans all occupied the port, and it is another of the legendary cities that claim Hercules as its founder. But following 5th-century Norman raids, the city lay in ruins until it was refounded in 1208 by Alfonso IX of León and Galicia.

The defining historical moment for A Coruña occurred in 1588, when it launched Felipe II's "Invincible Armada" on its ill-fated attack on England. Only half the ships made it back to Spain. The following year, Sir Francis Drake paid a visit to burn and loot A Coruña in reprisal.

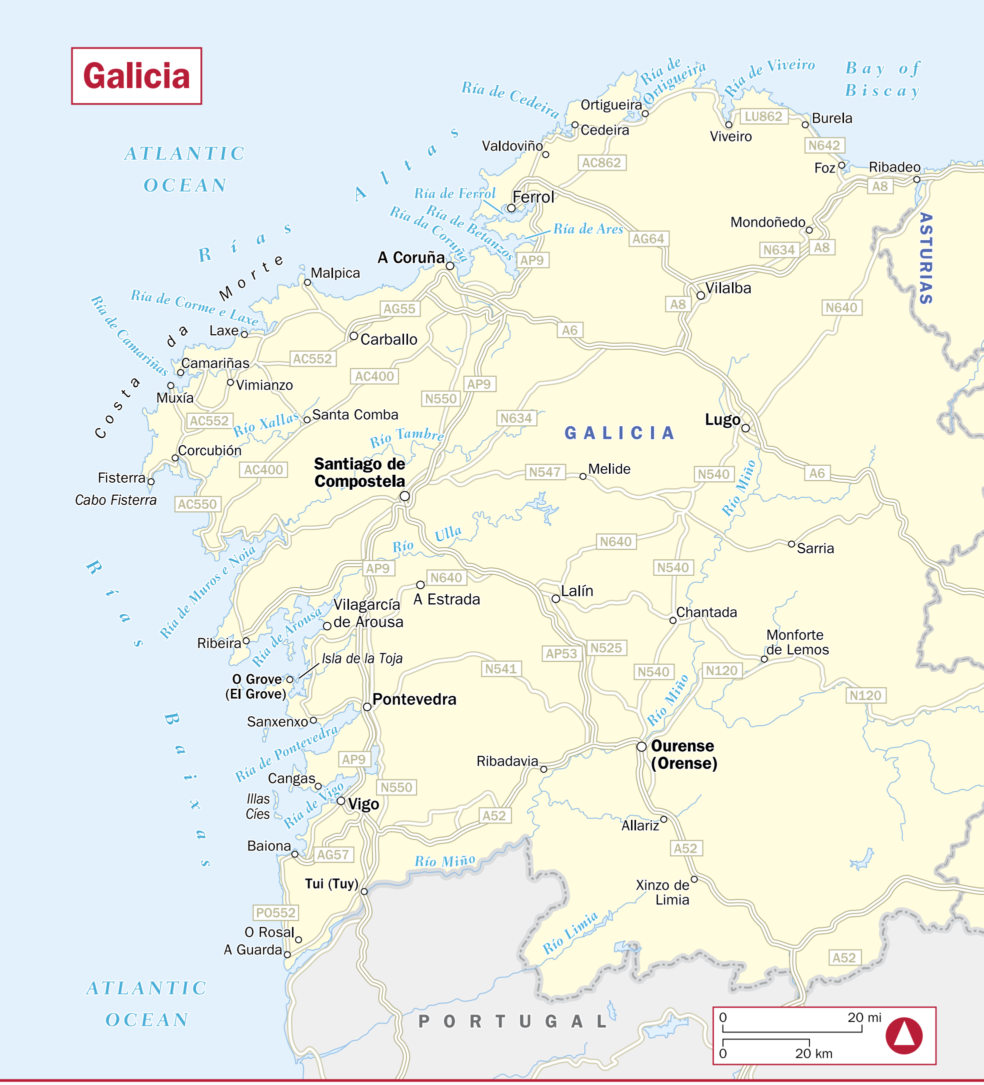
Essentials

GETTING THERE Seven flights a week wing their way from Madrid to A Coruña. **Aeropuerto de Alvedro** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**) lies 10km (6¼ miles) from the heart of the city and is serviced by **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642**), **Air Nostrum** (www.airnostrum.es; ✆ **34-96-196-03-19**), **TAP Portugal** (www.flytap.com; ✆ **351-707-205-700**), and **Vueling Airlines** (www.vueling.com; ✆ **34-807-20-01-00**).

Trains arrive at Estación San Cristóbal, Praza San Cristóbal (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**). Depending on the train, the one-way ride from Madrid lasts 6¾ to 9½ hours and costs 54€ to 57€. **Monbus** (www.monbus.es; ✆ **90-229-29-00**) runs **buses** between A Coruña and Santiago de Compostela every hour. Trip time one-way is between 50 minutes and 1½ hours, and costs 13€.

By car, A Coruña is reached from Madrid by the N-VI. You can also follow the coastal highway, N-634, which runs all the way across the northern rim of Spain from San Sebastián to the east.

GETTING AROUND A Coruña is remarkably compact, since the ancient port city sits on a thumblike peninsula. It is easy to walk from one point of interest to another. The port side of town (the east) has the working port, the seaside gardens, and the old fort. The port area opens into Praza (Plaza) de María Pita, which divides the Old Town from the newer city. It is an easy 10-minute walk across the peninsula to Riazor and Orzan beaches on the west side of the peninsula. The Beach Promenade is a paved and landscaped walkway along the waterfront that covers 13km (8 miles) of the periphery of A Coruña's peninsula. More far-flung attractions can be reached on Bus 3, which makes a circuit of the peninsula. Fare is 1.20€ adults, .30€ seniors and students.


Galicia
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bay of Biscay
Rías Altas
Costa da Morte
Rías Baixas
Ría de Cedeira
Ría de Ortigueira
Ría de Viveiro
Ría de Ferrol
Ría de Betanzos
Ría da Coruña
Ría de Ares
Ría de Corme e Laxe
Ría de Camariñas
Río Xallas
Río Tambre
Río Ulla
Ría de Muros e Noia
Ría de Arousa
Ría de Pontevedra
Ría de Vigo
Río Miño
Río Limia
GALICIA
ASTURIAS
PORTUGAL
Ortigueira
Cedeira
Valdoviño
Viveiro
Burela
Foz
Ribadeo
Ferrol
Mondoñedo
A Coruña
Malpica
Vilalba
Laxe
Carballo
Camariñas
Vimianzo
Muxía
Santa Comba
Lugo
Corcubión
Fisterra
Cabo Fisterra
Santiago de Compostela
Melide
Sarria
Lalín
A Estrada
Vilagarcía de Arousa
Chantada
Monforte de Lemos
Ribeira
Isla de la Toja
O Grove (El Grove)
Pontevedra
Sanxenxo
Ourense (Orense)
Ribadavia
Cangas
Illas Cíes
Vigo
Allariz
Baiona
Tui (Tuy)
Xinzo de Limia
O Rosal
A Guarda
LU862
N642
AC862
A8
AG64
N634
AP9
A6
AG55
AC552
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VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** at Dársena de la Marina s/n (www.turgalicia.es or www.coruna.es; ✆ **98-122-18-22**) is open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 2pm.

Exploring A Coruña

Acuarium Finisterrae ★ ☺ AQUARIUM As this snazzy new aquarium points out in its signage, "The whole coast of Galicia is a museum." Few subjects are so dear to the hearts of Galegos as the ocean and its creatures, and one of the exhibits here is literally the ocean on the other side of a glass wall from the aquarium. Fish swim by and crabs scuttle across the ocean floor. The underwater experience is amplified in an exhibit room that simulates the experience inside Captain

Nemo's *Nautilus* in the Jules Verne adventure tale *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.* Other tanks replicate marine environments around the world. Atlantic harbor seals cavort in their own pool. Changing exhibits highlight subjects as diverse as the effects of global warming on coral reefs or the promises and problems of aquaculture.

Paseo Alcalde Francisco Vázquez 34. www.casaciencias.org. ✆ **98-118-98-42.** Admission 10€ adults, 4€ seniors and students. Sept–June Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat–Sun 10am–8pm; July–Aug daily 10am–9pm. Closed Jan 1 and 6, Easter, and Dec 25–26. Bus: 3.

A Coruña's seaside promenade.

Ascensor Panorámico Monte San Pedro ☺ NATURAL ATTRACTION This glass elevator climbs 100m (328 ft.) to the top of a small mountain at the western edge of town—a great spot for sunsets or for looking down on the Torre de Hércules.

Parque San Pedro at the Millennium Obelisk. www.miradordesanpedro.es. No phone. 2€ each way. Operates every half-hour Oct–May Sun–Fri 11:30am–7:30pm and Sat 11:30am–9:30pm; June–Sept Tues–Sun 11:30am–9pm.

Convento da Santa Bárbara CONVENT The cobbled Prazuela de Santa Bárbara is a tiny, tree-shaded plaza flanked by old houses and the high walls of the Santa Bárbara convent. The Clarisas nuns (Poor Clares) are cloistered, but you might hear them singing their prayers at midday services, and you can purchase pastries from their *torno,* a small revolving window built into the convent's vestibule.

Prazuela de Santa Bárbara. *Torno* Mon–Fri 10:30am–12:30pm and 4:30–5:45pm, Sat 10:30am–noon.

Jardín de San Carlos PARK/GARDEN These gardens near the Casa de la Cultura date from 1843, and cover the site of an old fortress that once guarded the harbor. Their views make the gardens a terrific picnic spot. Within the gardens is the tomb of Gen. John Moore, a British commander who fought unsuccessfully against Napoleon's troops. He retreated with his British forces to A Coruña, where he was shot in a final battle.

Paseo del Parrote.

Jardines de Méndez Núñez PARK/GARDEN These gardens in the center of town make a restful interlude while sightseeing. They face the police station and overlook the port. The scent of roses is almost overpowering during May and June.

Btw. the harbor and Los Cantones (Cantón Grande and Cantón Pequeño).

Museo Arqueológico e Histórico MUSEUM This museum inside the 16th-century fort built to protect the harbor after Drake's raid has many unusual artifacts from A Coruña province. Perhaps the most striking exhibition is Celtic gold jewelry dating from 2500 to 500 B.C. Extensive displays of Roman pottery and metalwork chronicle the Roman era that lasted until the settlement was destroyed by Norman raiders in the 5th century.

Castillo de San Antón. www.coruna.es. ✆ **98-118-98-50.** Admission 2€ adults, 1€ for seniors and children 11 and under. July–Aug Tues–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun 10am–3pm; Sept–June Tues–Sat 10am–7:30pm, Sun 10am–2:30pm. Bus: 3 or 3A.

Praza (Plaza) de María Pita SQUARE This plaza divides the Old Town from the newer city and honors the memory of the woman who helped save many of A Coruña's citizens from slaughter by the English. According to legend, she spotted the approach of Drake's troops, and, risking her own life, fired a cannon to alert the citizens to an imminent invasion. For that act of heroism, she is revered to this day. The plaza was once the site of the stonemasons who built the piers of A Coruña, and today it is the social and political center of the city. It is hard to say where more business gets done: in City Hall or in the numerous cafes and bars, all of which share the square.

Santa María del Campo CHURCH This 13th-century church can only be viewed from the exterior, but it preserves some extraordinarily beautiful architectural details. The west door is elaborately carved in the traditional Romanesque-Gothic style. Beneath its rose window you'll see a Gothic portal from the 13th or 14th century. The tympanum is carved with a scene depicting the Adoration of the Magi.

Calle de Santa María.

Torre de Hércules ☺ LANDMARK Europe's oldest working lighthouse was first erected by the Romans in the 2nd century, although continued modernization has obscured its origins. A climb to the top provides great views of A Coruña's bay and port.

Av. de Navarra s/n. ✆ **98-122-37-30.** 2.50€ adults, 1.50€ seniors and students. Daily 10am–5:45pm.

Where to Eat

Two or so blocks from the waterfront, several restaurants specialize in Galician cuisine, all at competitive prices. It's customary to go window-shopping for food here. The restaurants along two of the principal streets—Calle de la Estrella and Calle de los Olmos—all have display counters up front.

Adega O Bebedeiro GALICIAN Only in business since the 1980s, this dining room looks much older and, in fact, evokes a rustic farmstead with its old stone walls, fireplace, and hardwood floors. Guests sit at pine tables and stools, taking in the backdrop of dust-covered wine bottles and farm equipment. The traditional food matches the traditional setting. The kitchen uses first-rate fresh ingredients in their hearty, regional fare such as local fish stuffed with shellfish and baked in a puff pastry, or simple baked scallops. A fall side dish worth savoring is the mushrooms grown in the nearby countryside and served in olive oil with a green-pepper sauce. In the spring, opt instead for the asparagus in a garlic sauce with langostinos and mussels. The kitchen also prepares some delicious rice plates studded with local seafood, including one (with clams, saffron, and grilled scallops) that even resembles paella.

Calle Ángel Rebollo 34. www.adegaobebedeiro.com. ✆ **98-121-06-09.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 13€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 8pm–midnight. Closed 2 weeks in both June and Dec. Bus: 2 or 3.

Casa Pardo ★ GALICIAN Near the bus station south of the Old Town, this restaurant is probably the most stately dining room in the city. Under the direction of Eduardo Pardo Pereira, it offers both a traditional cuisine and innovative seafood dishes. Fresh shellfish and fish dishes, everything from oysters to salmon, are prepared beautifully. The Galician turbot is delectable. Seafood items aren't the only selections on the menu—fresh meat and vegetable dishes are also well prepared. Patrons of this well-known dining room generally opt for the bracing wines of the Rías Baixas. The restaurant is elegant but unstuffy. The first-rate staff offers alert and graceful service.

Calle Novoa Santos 15. www.casapardo-domus.com. ✆ **98-128-00-21.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–30€. Fixed-price menus 40€–75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm; Tues–Sat 9pm–midnight. Bus: Any city bus.

El Coral ★ GALICIAN/SEAFOOD One of the most popular dining spots at the port, El Coral offers polite service, cleanliness, and Galician cookery prepared with distinction. The restaurant specializes in shellfish, fish, meats, and Galician wines. Popular main courses include *calamares rellenos* (stuffed squid) and *lubina al horno* (roasted sea bass). The front window forms an altar of shellfish in infinite varieties, a tapestry of crustaceans and mollusks. Inside, the atmosphere is intimate and elegant, with formally dressed waiters, crisp white linens, dark-wood-paneled walls, and glittering crystal chandeliers.

Av. de la Marina Callejón de la Estacada 9. www.restaurantemarisqueriacoral.com. ✆ **98-120-05-69.** Fax 98-122-91-09. Reservations recommended. Main courses 16€–26€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm and 9pm–midnight. Bus: 1, 2, 5, or 17.

Pablo Gallego Restaurante ★★ SEAFOOD A favorite of local fishmongers, this is one of the best dining options on Praza María Pita. Chomp down on octopus either in balsamic vinegar (cold) or *pulpo Galego* (stewed with potatoes and spicy paprika), or opt for the elegance of mixed brochettes of monkfish and langostinos. The restaurant also makes a meltingly delicious version of cod cheeks, and, in season, scrambled eggs with glass eels.

Praza de Maria Pita 11. www.pablogallegorestauracion.com. ✆ **98-120-88-88.** Main courses 15€–28€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Closed second half of Jan. Bus: Any city bus.

Entertainment & Nightlife

Some of the most appealing bars in A Coruña are atmospheric holes in the wall with a local clientele and a decor that has remained virtually unchanged since the mid-20th century. Start your evening at **A Roda,** Capitán Troncoso 8 (✆ **98-122-86-71;** daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight), which is rightly known for its tapas. A lively group of both locals and visitors can be found here devouring such selections as octopus in its own ink. If you want to go dancing after your drinks and tapas, and if it's after 11pm, consider a run into the town's most appealing and most popular disco, **Playa Club,** Andén de Riazor (www.playaclub.net; ✆ **98-127-75-14;** Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9pm–midnight). Set on an oceanfront terrace, a few feet from the waves of Playa Riazor, it's open year-round Thursday through Saturday.

Where to Stay

MODERATE

Hesperia Finisterre ★ ☺ Immediately above the port, a short walk east of the tourist information office at the edge of the Old Town, this high-rise hotel has panoramic views and small but comfortable guest rooms. Built in 1947 and renovated every few years, it features wall-to-wall carpeting, lots of exposed wood, and bright contemporary upholstery. It's a popular choice for business travelers.

Paseo del Parrote 20, 15001 A Coruña. www.hesperia-finisterre.com. ✆ **98-120-54-00.** Fax 98-120-84-62. 92 units. 88€–125€ double; from 104€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 1, 2, 3, or 5. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; children's programs; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; 3 outdoor heated pools; room service; sauna; 2 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Melià Maria Pita ★★ On Orzan beach, this Melià is easily the city's top hotel. It's in an elegant, tall modern building that is wrapped in glass and paved with marble in the public areas. Guest rooms are generally large and comfortable, with wooden floors and tasteful decor. The most desirable units come with private balconies overlooking the ocean, which is literally across the street. It is about a 10-minute stroll from Praza de María Pita by cutting across the peninsula on the back streets of old A Coruña.

Av. Pedro Barrié de la Maza 1, 15003 A Coruña. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **98-120-50-00.** Fax 98-120-55-65. 167 units. 63€–125€ double; from 149€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. Bus: 2 or 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

INEXPENSIVE

Eurostars Ciudad de la Coruña On the northwestern tip of the peninsula, surrounded by sea grasses and dunes, this pleasant establishment is cordoned off from the apartment-house complexes that surround it by a wide swath of green. Each attractively modern guest room has a private well-equipped bathroom. The guest rooms are generally roomy and maintenance is excellent. The main appeal, of course, is being away from the urban hubbub and looking out on the ocean.

Juan Sebastián El Cano 13, 15002 A Coruña. www.eurostarshotels.com. ✆ **90-293-24-24.** Fax 93-268-19-45. 131 units. 63€–83€ double; from 72€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 3, 3A, or 5. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Almirante There are few amenities here—just good, clean rooms, all doubles, at good prices. Room dimensions are a bit skimpy, but the price is right. All units are equipped with neatly kept bathrooms with shower stalls. There is no restaurant, but a continental breakfast is served in the cafeteria (for an extra charge). The location is a bonus: just 1 minute from the beach.

Paseo de Ronda 54, 15011 A Coruña. www.hotel-almirante.com. ✆ **98-125-96-00.** Fax 98-125-96-08. 19 units. 40€–55€ double. AE, MC, V. Parking 9€. Bus: 7, 14, or 14A. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* TV.

Hotel Riazor 🏷 In the center of the city by the sea, this hotel is one of the most affordable quality lodgings. Just cross the busy promenade and you're on the beach. The hotel has been frequently restored over the years, and most of the midsize to spacious bedrooms open onto panoramic views of the bay. Riazor is suitable for vacationers and business clients alike.

Av. Pedro Barrié de la Maza 29, 15004 A Coruña. www.riazorhotel.com. ✆ **98-125-34-00.** Fax 98-125-34-04. 174 units. 50€–85€ double, 70€–97€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 14€. Bus: 2 or 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

NH Atlántico ★ This convenient, comfortable, and contemporary hotel contrasts with the ornate 19th-century park surrounding it, where crowds of Galicians gather in fine weather. The Atlántico is in the building that houses the city's casino. Well-furnished guest rooms are among the most appealing in town, thanks to spacious dimensions and comfortably contemporary furnishings a cut above less expensive competitors.

Jardines de Méndez Núñez s/n, 15006 A Coruña. www.nh-hoteles.com. ✆ **98-122-65-00.** Fax 98-120-10-71. 199 units. 64€–115€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 1, 2, or 3. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (17€ per 24 hr.).

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA ★★★

614km (382 miles) NW of Madrid, 74km (46 miles) S of A Coruña

All roads in Spain once led to the northwestern pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela. A journey to the tomb of the beheaded apostle, St. James, was a high point for the medieval faithful—peasant and prince alike—who converged here from all over Europe. They still do, at the rate of more than 140,000 per year.

Santiago de Compostela's link with legend began in A.D. 813, when an urn was discovered containing what were believed to be the remains of St. James, an apostle of Jesus who was beheaded in Jerusalem. A temple was erected over the spot, but in the 16th century, church fathers hid the remains of the saint, fearing they might be destroyed in raids along the coast by Sir Francis Drake. Somewhat amazingly, the alleged remains—subject of millions of pilgrimages from across Europe—lay relatively forgotten.

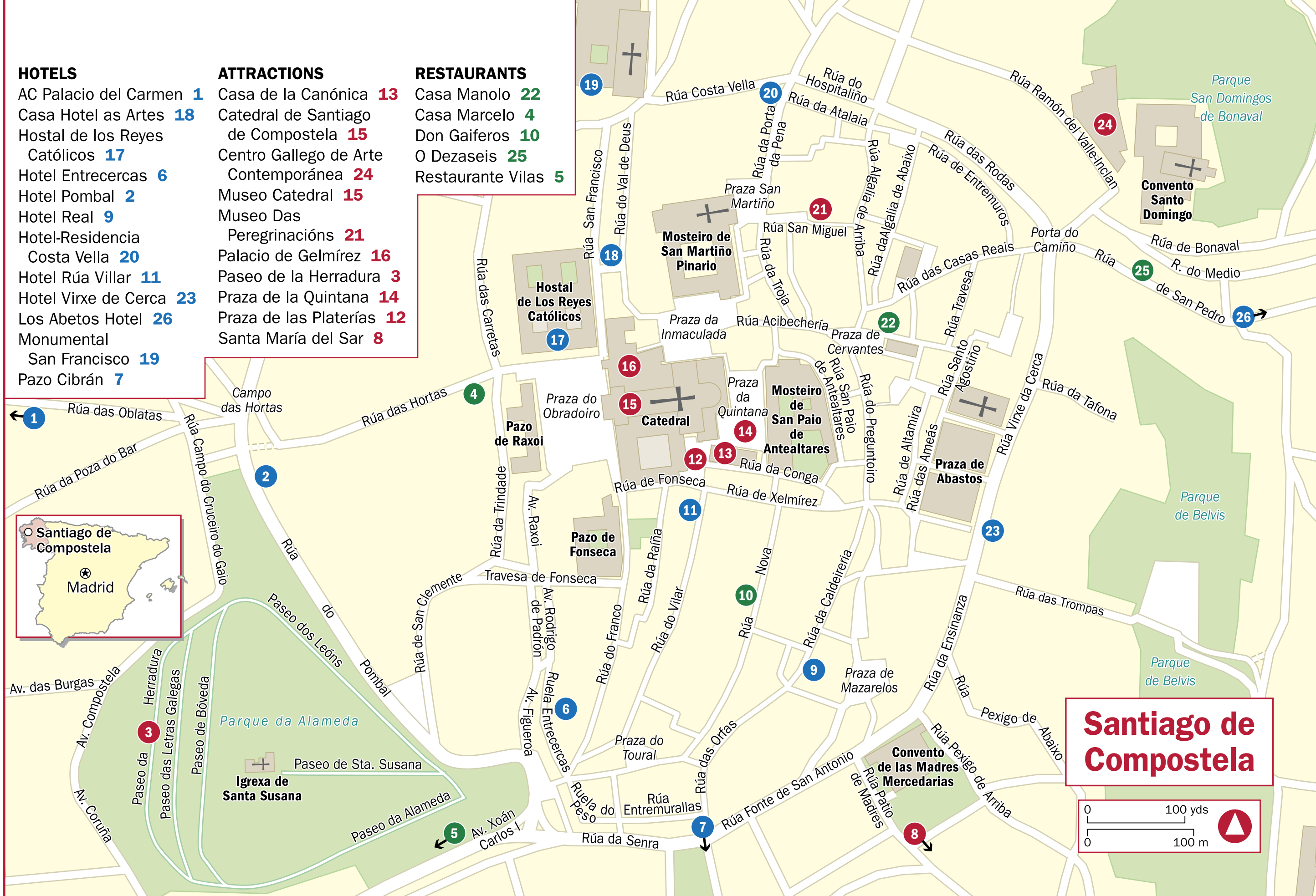
For decades no one was certain where they were. Then, in 1879, a workman making repairs on the church discovered what were supposed to be the remains, hidden since the 1500s. To prove it was the actual corpse of St. James, church officials brought back a sliver of the skull of St. James from Italy. They claimed that it fit perfectly, like a puzzle piece, into the recently discovered skeleton.

In addition to being the third-most-holy city of the Christian world (after Rome and Jerusalem), Santiago de Compostela is a university town and a marketplace for Galician farmers. With its flagstone streets, churches, and shrines, it is one of the most romantic and historic of Spain's great cities. Santiago also has the dubious distinction of being the rainiest city in Spain, but the showers tend to arrive and end suddenly. Locals claim that the rain only makes their city more beautiful, and the rain-slick cobblestones might prompt you to agree.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Madrid, Iberia has five daily **flights** to Santiago, and there is one daily flight from Barcelona. The only international airport in Galicia is east of Santiago de Compostela at Lavacolla (✆ **90-240-47-04** for flight information), 11km (6¾ miles) from the center on the road to Lugo.

Santiago de Compostela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Rúa das Rodas
Rúa de Entremuros
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Rúa Costa Vella
Rúa da Porta da Pena
Rúa Algalia de Arriba
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Rúa das Casas Reais
Rúa Travesa
Rúa Santo Agostiño
Rúa Virxe da Cerca
Rúa da Tafona
Parque de Belvis
Rúa das Trompas
Rúa da Ensinanza
Rúa Pexigo de Abaixo
Rúa Pexigo de Arriba
Convento de las Madres Mercedarias
Rúa Patio de Madres
Praza de Abastos
Rúa das Ameás
Rúa de Altamira
Rúa do Preguntoiro
Praza de Cervantes
Rúa San Paio de Antealtares
Mosteiro de San Paio de Antealtares
Rúa da Conga
Rúa de Xelmírez
Rúa da Caldeireria
Praza de Mazarelos
Rúa Nova
Rúa das Orfas
Rúa Fonte de San Antonio
Praza San Martiño
Mosteiro de San Martiño Pinario
Rúa San Miguel
Rúa da Troja
Rúa Acibechería
Praza da Inmaculada
Praza da Quintana
Catedral
Rúa de Fonseca
Rúa do Val de Deus
Rúa San Francisco
Hostal de Los Reyes Católicos
Praza do Obradoiro
Pazo de Raxoi
Rúa das Carretas
Rúa das Hortas
Campo das Hortas
Rúa das Oblatas
Rúa da Poza do Bar
Rúa Campo do Cruceiro do Gaio
Rúa da Trindade
Av. Raxoi
Pazo de Fonseca
Travesa de Fonseca
Rúa da Raíña
Rúa do Vilar
Rúa do Franco
Av. Rodrigo de Padrón
Ruela Entrecercas
Av. Figueroa
Praza do Toural
Rúa Entremurallas
Ruela do Peso
Rúa da Senra
Rúa de San Clemente
Rúa do Pombal
Paseo dos Leóns
Parque da Alameda
Paseo de Sta. Susana
Igrexa de Santa Susana
Paseo da Alameda
Av. Xoán Carlos I
Paseo de Bóveda
Paseo das Letras Galegas
Paseo da Herradura
Av. Compostela
Av. Coruña
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From A Coruña, 21 **trains** make the 1-hour trip daily at a cost of 6€ to 20€. Three trains arrive daily from Madrid; the 6- to 9-hour trip costs 47€ to 54€. For information, visit www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

Buses leave on the hour, connecting A Coruña with Santiago (trip time: 1 hr.), and cost 13€ one-way. For information, contact **Monbus** (www.monbus.es; ✆ **98-229-29-00**). Eight buses a day arrive in Santiago from Madrid, taking 8 hours and costing 74€ one-way. For information, visit www.alsa.es or call **Alsa** at ✆ **90-242-22-42.**

If you're driving, take the express highway (A-9/E-50) south from A Coruña to reach Santiago. From Madrid, N-VI runs to Galicia. From Lugo, head south along N-640.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Rúa del Vilar 43 (www.turgalicia.es; ✆ **98-158-40-81**), is open Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm, Saturday 11am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm.

Exploring Santiago

Santiago de Compostela's highlight is undoubtedly its storied cathedral, and you should take at least 2 hours to see it. Most of the other impressive buildings are on Praza del Obradoiro, also called Praza de España. After visiting them, take a stroll through this enchanting town, which has a number of other interesting monuments as well as many stately mansions along Rúa del Vilar and Rúa Nueva. One of the most important squares in the Old Town is **Praza de la Quintana,** to the left of the cathedral's Puerta de Orfebrería (Goldsmith's Doorway). This is a favorite square with students, who often perch on the flight of broad steps that connect the rear of the cathedral to the walls of a convent. The square is dominated by **Casa de la Canónica,** the former residence of the canon. South of the square is the Renaissance-style **Praza de las Platerías (Silversmiths' Square),** which has an elaborate fountain. Cap off a day of sightseeing with a walk along **Paseo de la Herradura,** the gardens southwest of the Old Town, from where you have an all-encompassing view of the cathedral and the Old City.

Catedral de Santiago de Compostela ★★★ CATHEDRAL Begun in the 11th century, this cathedral is the crowning achievement of Spanish Romanesque architecture, even though it actually reflects a number of styles. Maestro

The silhouette of the Catedral de Santiago de Compostela.

The Plaza de las Platerías.

Mateo's **Pórtico de la Gloria ★★★**, carved in 1188, ranks among the finest produced in Europe at that time. The three arches of the portico are carved with biblical figures from the Last Judgment. In the center, Christ is flanked by apostles and the 24 Elders of the Apocalypse. Below the Christ figure is a depiction of St. James himself. He crowns a carved column that includes a self-portrait statue of Mateo at the bottom. If you observe this column, you will see that five deep indentations have been worn into it by pilgrims. Even today, they line up here to lean forward, place their hands on the pillar, and touch foreheads with Mateo. Mothers bring their infants here to do the same thing: bump foreheads with possibly Europe's greatest artistic master of the late 11th century in hopes some of the genius will rub off.

A detail from the Cathedral's Pórtico de la Gloria.

The cathedral has three naves in cruciform shape and several chapels and cloisters. The altar, with its blend of Gothic simplicity and baroque decor, is extraordinary. In the crypt, a silver urn contains what the faithful accept as the remains of the apostle St. James. A cathedral museum, **Museo de Catedral ★★**, displays tapestries, archaeological fragments, and the ruins of a circa-1200 masterpiece, a stone choir carved by Maestro Mateo. Next door, **Palacio de Gelmírez** (✆ **98-157-23-00**), an archbishop's palace built during the 12th century, is an outstanding example of Romanesque architecture.

Praza del Obradoiro. www.catedraldesantiago.es. ✆ **98-156-05-27.** Admission to cathedral and Palacio de Gelmírez free; Museo de Catedral 5€ adults, 1€ for children. Cathedral daily 7am–9pm. Cloisters and Palacio de Gelmírez June–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–8pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Oct–May Mon–Sat 10am–1:30pm and 4–6:30pm, Sun 10am–1:30pm. Museo daily 10am–2pm and 4–8pm.

Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea ART MUSEUM The Galician Center of Contemporary Art highlights artworks from regional, national, and international artists. The center's changing exhibits feature contemporary artists, and it hosts retrospectives. Until the opening of this center, contemporary art had virtually no place on the city's agenda, which emphasized the ancient or the antique. Among the several exhibition rooms is a terrace for open-air exhibits, affording a panoramic view of Santiago's Old Town.

Rúa Valle-Inclán s/n. www.cgac.org. ✆ **98-154-66-19.** Free admission. Winter Tues–Sun 11am–8pm; summer Tues–Sun noon–9pm. Closed Jan 1 and 6, Easter, and Dec 25–26.

Colexiata de Santa María do Sar CHURCH Although a little removed from the center of town, this church is one of the architectural gems of the Romanesque style in Galicia. Its walls and columns are on a 15-degree slant thought to be attributable to either a fragile foundation or an architect's fancy. Visit the charming cloister with its slender columns.

Castrón d'Ouro, .8km (½ mile) down Calle de Sar, which begins at the Rúa do Patio de Madres. Admission 1€. Mon–Sat 10am–1pm and 4–7pm.

Hostal de los Reyes Católicos ★ ICON Now a *parador* (p. 679), this daunting structure next to the cathedral was built in the late 15th century as a pilgrim's hospice and later served as a royal hospice. It was designed by Enrique de Egas, Isabel and Fernando's favorite architect. Tourists may visit the cloistered courtyard with its beautiful 16th- to 18th-century fountains and the main chapel; however, you must have a guide from the cathedral in attendance.

Praza del Obradoiro s/n. ✆ **98-158-22-00.** Free admission. Daily 10am–1pm and 4–7pm.

Museo das Peregrinacións ★ MUSEUM Almost any question you'd have about Santiago the city or the saint is answered here at the Museum of Pilgrimages. Dioramas, artifacts, and wall texts examine the phenomenon of pilgrimages around the world, the legend and facts regarding the transfer of the body of St. James the Apostle here after his death in A.D. 44, and the growth of Santiago as a pilgrimage site from the 11th century onward. One set of displays deals with the major pilgrimage roads to Santiago.

Rua San Miguel 4. www.mdperegrinacions.com. ✆ **98-158-15-58.** Admission 2.40€. Tues–Fri 10am–8pm; Sat–Sun 10:30am–1:30pm. Closed Jan 1 and 6, Easter, and Dec 25–26.

Where to Eat

VERY EXPENSIVE

Casa Marcelo ★★★ CONTEMPORARY GALICIAN This dining-destination restaurant has enjoyed meteoric success. Installed in a building in the rear of Praza Obradoiro, it caters to the "pilgrims" who are ready to give up self-denial and reward themselves for having lasted the journey. Indeed, it is possible that some peregrinos are looking forward as much to dinner as to reaching the cathedral. Flamboyant chef-owner Marcelo Tejedor claims that he runs "a small temple to the succulent," and most of Spain's top restaurant critics agree. Tejedor offers fixed-price menus that he improvises daily after going to the market. The cuisine is inventive with a certain flair, and half the fun is seeing what alchemy Tejedor has worked with the quotidian ingredients of the market stalls. He can take a usually ordinary potato-and-leek soup and make it special with the addition of fresh clams. Another specialty is his red tuna carpaccio with tomato jam. Sometimes he serves the catch of the day with a savory cream of seaweed, and his meat and poultry dishes are usually combined with an exotic ingredient. Most menus are nine courses, with each plate roughly the size of a tapas plate. Prices vary with ingredients. Expect the higher price range during truffle season or the winter months when angulas (glass eels) are available. Wines are extra.

Rúa Hortas 1. www.casamarcelo.net. ✆ **98-155-85-80.** Reservations required. Fixed-price menu 60€–75€. AE, MC, V. Mon and Wed–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 9–11:30pm. Closed Feb.

MODERATE

Don Gaiferos ★ GALICIAN Located right next to the Church of Santa María Salomé only 200m (656 ft.) from the cathedral, this veteran restaurant serves well-crafted Galician cuisine. The best items are generally fish and their shellfish cousins. Giant turbot and silvery hake are landed in A Coruña and shipped to Santiago by truck, so you can count on them being superfresh. And this being Santiago, you really should try the scallops (the saint's symbol). Don Gaiferos also makes a thick, well-seasoned fish stew. Galicia is equally famous for its veal and beef, so do consider either roast beef or a veal tartare. Like many Santiago restaurants, Don Gaiferos has more desserts than are usual in Spanish restaurants. One of the best is the almond tart. The restaurant also has a very good (and large) wine bar where the main tapas are shellfish.

Rúa Nova 23. www.dongaiferos.com. ✆ **98-158-38-94.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–24€. Fixed-price menu 35€. Tapas 3€–5€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:15–3:45pm; Tues–Sat 8:15–11:30pm.

O Dezaseis 🎁 TAPAS/GALICIAN The best place in town for tapas and empanadas lies slightly out of the city center and is well worth the trek. You can build an entire meal around these tapas, or else order one of the generous fixed-price menus. "Sixteen" (its English name) is in a subterranean, grottolike section with stone and wood that used to be a stable some 3 centuries ago. The empanadas are exceptional, especially slices from a huge wheel of tuna flavored with Spanish paprika and baked inside a savory pastry. Octopus is another specialty, and it's cooked until tender and then tossed on the superhot grill and sprinkled with spices. Small plates of fish emerge from the grill, including wonderful grilled swordfish or else you can have an omelet with ham and chorizo. The local ham, *lacón,* is a raw ham like prosciutto and *jamón serrano,* but instead of being cured in dry air (which Galicia lacks), it is cold-smoked for several months.

Rúa San Pedro 16. www.dezaseis.com. ✆ **98-156-48-80.** Reservations not needed. Tapas 3.50€–14€. Main courses 11€–13€. Fixed-price menus 12€–20€. MC, V. Mon–Sat 2–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight.

Restaurante Vilas 🎁 SEAFOOD Located on the outskirts of the Old Town on the road to Pontevedra, this reliable Spanish tavern has enjoyed a devoted clientele for several decades. Beyond the large bar near the entrance and display cases filled with fresh fish, you'll find the baronial stone-trimmed dining room. A wide variety of fish is available—fresh sardines, three different preparations of salmon, a *caldeirada* (seafood stew), and eels. Two kinds of rice dishes are served, and nonfish dishes such as partridge and rabbit are also on the menu. The restaurant was founded in 1915 as a small eating house. Back then, it was on the outskirts of town, but it was enveloped by the city long ago. Today, the restaurant is run by the grandsons of the original founders.

Calle Rosalía de Castro 88. http://vilas.restaurantesok.com. ✆ **98-159-21-70.** Reservations required. Main courses 10€–25€. Fixed-price menu 19€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–5pm and Mon–Fri 8pm–midnight.

INEXPENSIVE

Casa Manolo GALICIAN Set in the large but cozy dining room of a brick house that's at least a century old, this family-run restaurant is perfect for pilgrims who wish they were still on the road. It serves just one menu per day, a Menu del Peregino (Pilgrim's Menu) of inexpensive fare. Although the restaurant is nominally Galician, you would never know it from the veal cutlets served in faux-Italian style, or the frequent appearance of cannelloni stuffed with ricotta and doused with tomato sauce. Better bets, when available, are the meat dishes—usually small pork or beef steaks or cutlets that have been grilled and are served with boiled vegetables and potatoes. Nonetheless, the food is rib-sticking and the atmosphere, like so much of the pilgrim experience, is comradely.

Praza Cervantes s/n. www.casamanolo.es. ✆ **98-158-29-50.** Fixed-price menu 9.50€. MC, V. Daily 1–4pm; Mon–Sat 8:30–11:30pm. Closed Jan.

Shopping

The artful blue-and-white porcelain that is the town's trademark is available for sale at **Sargadelos,** Rúa Nueva 16 (www.sargadelos.com/sargadelos; ✆ **98-158-19-05**). A competitor that stocks similar ceramics, plus a wide range of other regional handicrafts, is **Amboa Maeloc,** Rúa Nueva 44 (www.amboamaeloc.com; ✆ **98-158-33-59**).

A favorite of most tourists is *tarta Santiago,* a tart sold at virtually every pastry shop in the city. Also very popular is *queso de tetilla,* a mild local cheese shaped like a woman's breast.

Many of the local wines, including assorted bottles of Ribeiro, Condado, and, most famous of all, Albariño, are sold without fanfare in grocery stores throughout Galicia. But for a specialist in the subtleties of Galician and other Spanish wines, head for **Charcuterías Seco,** San Pedro Mezonzo (www.charcuteriaseco.com; ✆ **98-159-12-67**).

Entertainment & Nightlife

In the religious center of Galicia, there's a lot more to do after dark than pray. An estimated 200 bars and *cafeterías* are found on the Rúa do Franco and its neighbor, Rúa da Raiña. The pavement along those streets on weekend evenings at around 11pm is mobbed. You can have a lot of fun ducking into any of the establishments, but particularly convivial is **Bar/Cafetería Dakar,** Rúa do Franco 13 (✆ **98-157-81-92**).

Obeiro, Rúa da Raiña 3 (www.obeiro.com; ✆ **98-158-13-70**), is one of the town's better wine bars, with a good selection of bottles from throughout the country, especially wines from Galicia itself. Slices of *lacón* (smoked ham), savory sausages, and homemade country terrines round out the food offerings, along with an excellent selection of Galician cheese.

EUROPE'S oldest HOTEL

The oldest hotel in Europe has been giving travelers a place of rest for 5 centuries. In 1499 the Catholic kings founded the Hospedaje Real (Royal Hospice) in Santiago de Compostela to serve as a respite for the thousands of pilgrims who came to pay homage to the shrine of Saint James. Known today as the **Hostal de los Reyes Católicos** (see below), the same structure is Europe's most ancient hotel, and certainly one of its most luxurious.

During the Middle Ages, Santiago was considered, after Jerusalem and Rome, the third holiest city of Christendom. The cult of Santiago (St. James) drew streams of pilgrims trekking across northern Spain in search of the saint's tomb. The route to Santiago proved long, arduous, and dangerous. Having made the pilgrimage themselves, the Catholic monarchs experienced firsthand the dearth of lodging options along the way—hence the decision by Fernando and Isabel to construct monasteries and hospitals to house and protect visitors, the best effort culminating in this prominent structure.

Construction on the Hospital Real began in the 15th century and continued through the 18th century. Set on Praza de Obradoiro, this grand edifice shares the square with the impressive cathedral of Santiago. In addition to its luxury rooms, the hotel boasts a concert and exhibition room surrounded by cloisters.

Architecturally, the old part of the city stopped developing in the baroque period and, as a result, its buildings exude an aura of impressive grandeur—in fact, a sense of mysticism permeates Santiago. It is fitting, then, that one of Spain's great monumental cities should be home to one of the country's most luxurious, historically significant hotels.

One of the town's hot spots is **Pub Modus Vivendi,** Praza Feixoó 1 (www.pubmodusvivendi.net; ✆ **98-157-61-09**), where rock music blasts the night away in a cozy but too crowded interior. It's very psychedelic in decor and attracts local students and young visiting foreigners Sunday to Thursday 6:30pm to 3am, Friday and Saturday 6:30pm to 4:30am. Techno, house, pop, and rock music are played at the garishly decorated **Retablo Café-Concerto,** Rúa Nova 13 (www.retablocafeconcerto.com; ✆ **98-156-48-51**). It's open daily noon to 5am.

Where to Stay

EXPENSIVE

Hostal de los Reyes Católicos ★★★ This former 16th-century hospice, founded by Fernando and Isabel, is one of the most spectacular hotels in Europe. Next to the cathedral, it served as a resting place and hospital for pilgrims visiting the tomb of Saint James. Even if you don't stay here, you should take a guided tour (p. 676). The hotel has four huge open-air courtyards, each with its own covered walk, gardens, and fountains. In addition, there are great halls, French grillwork, and a large collection of antiques. A Gothic chapel hosts weekly concerts. Guest rooms range from small units to a palatial room that was once Franco's bedchamber. Many of the palatial rooms have ornate canopied beds draped in embroidered red velvet. Hand-carved chests, gilt mirrors, and oil paintings enhance the air of luxury. The private bathrooms are quite sumptuous.

Praza del Obradoiro 1, 15705 Santiago de Compostela. www.parador.es. ✆ **98-158-22-00.** Fax 98-156-30-94. 137 units. 140€–340€ double; from 400€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MODERATE

AC Palacio del Carmen ★ 🎁 Installed in a former convent, this property retained the original convent architecture when it was converted into a hotel. It stands in the historic center near Praza del Obradoiro. In spite of the building's age, all the small-to-midsize guest rooms have been comfortably styled and fitted with modern conveniences, including tiled bathrooms. The on-site restaurant serves an innovative Galician cuisine, with some haute cuisine dishes added to tempt the most demanding of palates.

Oblatas s/n, 15703 Santiago de Compostela. www.ac-hotels.com. ✆ **98-155-24-44.** Fax 98-155-24-45. 74 units. 90€–120€ double; 149€–275€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; indoor heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (12€ per 24 hr.).

Hotel Rúa Villar ★ 🎁 One of the best examples of recycling an old building, this stellar guesthouse was converted from an 18th-century manor house. Exposed stone walls and mellow old wood beams evoke the past, but all the rooms and amenities are up-to-date. Marble and wood are used throughout. The hotel lies in the heart of the monumental zone of Santiago, only 15m (49 ft.) from the cathedral, which can make it a bit noisy at night.

Rúa do Vilar 8–10, 15705 Santiago de Compostela. www.hotelruavillar.com. ✆ **98-151-98-58.** Fax 98-151-96-77. 14 units. 87€–210€ double. Rates include breakfast buffet. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Virxe da Cerca ★ A 10-minute walk from the cathedral, this 18th-century structure has served both as a bank and as a residence for the Santiago Jesuit community. The once "royal road" ran in front of the building. The facade opens toward the market in the historic part of town, where country vendors peddle their wares; the back opens toward Belvis Park. The hotel also has a private garden. Part of its charm is a glass-encased dining area, evoking an old cloister. All guest rooms have been tastefully and attractively furnished. The restaurant's Galician cuisine is first-rate.

Virxe da Cerca 27, 15703 Santiago de Compostela. www.pousadasdecompostela.com. ✆ **98-156-93-50.** Fax 98-158-69-25. 43 units. 75€–145€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Limited free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

San Francisco Hotel Monumento ★★ 🎁 This unique hotel was carved out of a convent dating from 1214, said to have been founded by St. Francis himself on a pilgrimage to Santiago. Today, after a skillful conversion, the San Francisco receives guests, although a pleasing air of monasticism remains. When you encounter the stone walls, the wooden beams, and the dark brown colors, you can imagine being a medieval monk, especially if you get one of the less expensive, cell-like rooms. The place is immaculately kept and reasonably comfortable. Too somber for the party crowd, the hotel is a tranquil oasis for those who seek peace and quiet on a corner in the Old Town. The restaurant should be skipped.

Campillo San Francisco 3, 15705 Santiago de Compostela. www.sanfranciscohm.com. ☎ **98-158-16-34.** 76 units. 90€–150€ double; 190€–210€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Internet (free), minibar.

INEXPENSIVE

Casa Hotel as Artes 🎁 Close to the cathedral, this hotel is an inviting choice for those who can't afford the steep rates of Hostal de los Reyes Católicos. Each of its midsize, bright rooms is named after a different international artist and decorated with taste and whimsy in the spirit of that artist. Rooms honor Rodin, Dante, Vivaldi, Gaudí, Picasso, and even Charlie Chaplin. The Picasso Room has two reproductions of his paintings, including one from his so-called "blue period." Rooms are decorated in an old Spanish style, with hardwood floors, wrought-iron double beds, and recessed windows with beveled shutters.

Travesía de Dos Puertas 2, off Rúa San Francisco, 15707 Santiago de Compostela. www.asartes.com. ☎ **98-157-25-90.** Fax 98-157-78-23. 7 units. 52€–105€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 11€. **Amenities:** Bar; sauna. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Entrecercas 🏷 This modern property not only offers some of the city's most affordable rooms, but lies close to the cathedral, so it's in the most central location for exploring the medieval core on foot. The owner has sensitively restored the old building, retaining its ancient stonework and restoring exposed and time-blackened wood beams. Guest rooms are simply but comfortably decorated. In summer you should reserve as far in advance as possible.

Entrecercas 11, 15705 Santiago de Compostela. www.hotelentrecercas.es. ☎ **98-157-11-51.** Fax 98-157-11-12. 8 units. 75€–86€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 13€. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Pombal ★ Across from the Alameda, this is one of the newest inns of Santiago, built in 2004. It is part of the Pousadas de Compostela chain of hotels. Lying an 8- to 10-minute walk from the cathedral in the heart of the historic district, the hotel has both charm and grace. The midsize guest rooms have been tastefully and comfortably converted, with many traditional touches evocative of 19th-century Spain.

Rúa do Pombal 12, 15705 Santiago de Compostela. www.pousadasdecompostela.com. ☎ **98-156-93-50.** Fax 98-158-69-25. 15 units. 64€–105€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Real 🎁 Only a few minutes' walk from the cathedral, this small hotel is a charmer. A former house for university students, it's been successfully converted to receive guests at large. Its guest rooms are distributed across three floors, all of them enjoying natural light and a balcony overlooking the medieval city. The guest rooms are small but tastefully furnished and comfortable, each with a tidy, immaculate bathroom. Breakfast, the only meal offered, is served in a delightful little salon.

Caldereria 49, 15700 Santiago de Compostela. www.hotelreal.com. ☎ **98-156-92-90.** Fax 98-156-92-91. 13 units. 50€–70€ double. AE, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Room service. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel-Residencia Costa Vella This well-run hotel is on Porta de la Peña, which leads into the medieval sector of Santiago. The traditional, glass-fronted building is located at one of the loftiest points in the city. Midsize guest rooms

Sleeping in Historic Places

A marvelous new way of staying in Galicia is a web of historic inns, manor houses, and even convents that welcome visitors. It's organized through **Pazos de Galicia** (www.pazosdegalicia.com).

You can obtain a map on the Web showing historic homes around the cities you plan to visit in Galicia, with A Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, and Pontevedra being the most preferred choices. Of course, you'll need a car to reach these places, which lie outside cities or towns of historic interest. Just to get you started and to show what's available, here's a preview of the offerings.

Pazo La Buzaca, Lugar de San Lorenzo 36, 36668 Morana (www.pazolabuzaca.com; ✆ **98-655-36-84**), is a 13-room 17th-century structure that houses guests luxuriously behind a stone wall. Part of the complex was a former hunting lodge. It is a good base for exploring attractions in and around Pontevedra.

A restored, rustic manor house, **Pazo do Souto,** La Toree 1, 106 Yessamo Carballo (www.pazodosouto.com; ✆ **98-175-60-65**), makes an ideal base for exploring the maritime city of A Coruña. Guests live in style and luxury at this beautiful property, which had stood abandoned for 27 years but today has a fine restaurant and an outdoor swimming pool.

have Galician styling, with carved wooden headboards and stone accents. The rooms manage to look classical yet modern. Breakfast, served with a view, features such Galician delights as cheese with honey, almond cake, and homemade toasted bread.

Rúa Porta de Peña 17, 15704 Santiago de Compostela. www.costavella.com. ✆ **98-156-95-30.** Fax 98-156-95-31. 14 units. 70€–97€ double. MC, V. Parking 9€, must be reserved in advance. Closed Dec 23–Jan 8. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Los Abetos Hotel ★ If you're seeking quaint charm from long ago, check into the Reyes Católicos *parador.* But if you want the best facilities in town and up-to-date comfort in a comfortable business hotel that works equally well for pilgrims, consider this member of the Sercotel group. Surrounded by private gardens, the hotel also has terrific fitness facilities, with everything from a modern gym to a heated swimming pool. (Of course, if you walked here from France, you might not care.) Guest rooms range from midsize to spacious, and each comes with a first-rate private bathroom with tub and shower.

San Lázaro s/n, 15820 Santiago de Compostela. www.hotellosabetos.com. ✆ **98-155-70-26.** Fax 98-158-61-77. 148 units. 70€–115€ double. Children 9 and under stay free. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor pool; sauna; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Pazo Cibrán ★ 🎁 Sensitively restored, this farmhouse/manor dates from the 1700s. It's located 7km (4⅓ miles) to the south of Santiago, about 15 minutes by car if there's no traffic. You're welcomed by the hospitable proprietor, Mayka Iglesias, who offers six rooms in the main manor plus five more spacious accommodations in a converted stable. Guest rooms are beautifully and traditionally furnished, and come with handsome bathrooms. Señora Iglesias has maintained her ancestral family living room so that it's filled with antiques and interesting objects; it opens onto a stunning garden. There's even a "bamboo walk." Nearby, in another converted house, is the **Restaurant Roberto.** Traditional Galician dishes with homegrown products are served here.

San Xulián de Sales s/n, 15885 Verda. www.pazocibran.com. ☎ **98-151-15-15.** Fax 98-181-47-66. 11 units. 50€–100€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Bar; babysitting; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV/DVD, no phone.

RÍAS ALTAS ★

158km (98 miles) NE of Santiago de Compostela, 607km (377 miles) NW of Madrid

In Norway, they're called fjords; in Brittany, abers; in Scotland, lochs; and in Galicia, *rías.* These tidal inlets have been cut into the rocky Galician coastline by the turbulent Atlantic Ocean pounding against its shores.

Rías Altas is a relatively modern name applied to all the estuaries on the northern Galician coast, from Ribadeo (the gateway to Galicia on the border with Asturias) to A Coruña (the big Atlantic seaport of northwest Spain). The part that begins at Ribadeo, part of Lugo province, is also called Marina Lucense. Four estuaries form the Artabro Gulf: A Coruña, Betanzoa, Ares, and O Ferrol. All four converge on a single point, where the Marola crag rises.

Many travelers heading into Galicia from Asturias enjoy the coastal drive for both the striking scenery and quaint and ancient villages along the way. The coastal highway is a fast road, but the corniche roads hug the undulating coastline. Please keep in mind that while corniche roads are sinuous and panoramic, they are often located high above the major roads and have steep, usually dangerous drop-offs on the other side.

Exploring the Rías Altas

ALONG THE ROAD FROM RIBADEO TO A CORUÑA

From Ribadeo on the Asturias border, take the corniche road west (N-634) until you reach the Ría de Foz. About 2.5km (1½ miles) south of the Foz-Barreiros highway, perched somewhat in isolation on a hill, stands **Iglesia de San Martín de Mondoñeda,** part of a monastery that dates from 1112. The little town of **Foz** is a fishing village and a summer resort with beaches separated by a cliff. You might stop here for lunch.

From Foz, cut northwest along the coastal highway (C-642), going through **Burela,** another fishing village. You can make a slight detour south to **Sargadelos,** a ceramics center. You can purchase the famous Galician pottery here much more cheaply than elsewhere in Spain.

Back on the coastal road (C-642) at Burela, continue west, approaching Ría de Viveiro and the historic village of **Viveiro.** Part of its medieval walls and an old gate, Puerta de Carlos V, have been preserved. The town has many old churches of interest, including the Gothic-style Iglesia San Francisco. Viveiro is a summer resort, attracting vacationers to its beach, Playa Covas, which is another good option for a lunch stop.

The road continues northwest to **Vicedo,** passing such beaches as Xillo and Aerealong. Excellent vistas greet you, and oxen can be seen plowing the cornfields.

Driving on, you'll notice the coastline becoming more saw-toothed. Eventually you reach **Ortigueira,** a major fishing village at the head of the *ría* (estuary) from which it takes its name. A Celtic folk festival is staged here at the end of August.

Rock formations on the Galician coast outside Vicedo.

From here you can continue south along C-642 to **O Ferrol** (**El Ferrol** in Castilian), which used to be called El Caudillo, in honor of the late dictator Francisco Franco, who was born here and who used to spend part of his summers in this area. O Ferrol is one of the major shipbuilding centers of Spain, and since the 18th century it has been a center of the Spanish navy. It's a grimy town, but it lies on one of the region's most beautiful *rías.* Despite its *parador,* few tourists linger at O Ferrol.

From O Ferrol, C-642 continues south, passing through the small town of **Puentedeume** (also spelled Pontedeume), on the Rías Ares. Historically, it was the center of the counts of Andrade. The remains of their 14th-century palace can be seen, along with the ruins of a 13th-century castle, rising to the east.

Shortly below Betanzos, head west along N-VI until you reach A Coruña. The entire trip from Ribadeo is roughly 242km (150 miles) and takes at least 4 hours.

FROM A CORUÑA TO CABO FISTERRA

This next section, the drive "to the end of the world," takes you from A Coruña to **Cabo Fisterra ★** (called Fisterra or Finisterre on most maps). The 145km (90-mile) trip takes at least 3 hours. For the ancients, Cape Fisterra was the end of the world as they knew it.

This route takes you along **A Costa da Morte** (the **Coast of Death;** in Castilian, La Costa de la Muerte), so called because of the numerous shipwrecks that have occurred here.

Cabo Fisterra, the end of the world.

EXPLORING THE RÍAS ALTAS ON two wheels

Some of the best biking in Spain is found in the Rías Altas. Much of south and central Spain is too hot for biking, but here temperatures are generally cool, and an interesting vista unfolds at every turn. The **tourist office** at Viveiro, Av. Ramón Canosa s/n (www.turgalicia.es; ✆ **98-256-08-79**), can give you a map and some suggested routes. The office is open Monday to Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm; July to August it's also open Sunday from 11:30am to 1:30pm.

From Viveiro, the most scenic route is to the west, along the C-642 to O Ferrol on the sea. A particularly dramatic stretch awaits you if you head north along a secondary road when you come to the junction with the little town of Mera. Signs point north to another little town, Cariño, opening onto views of Cabo Ortegal. To the east is a sheltered body of water, Ría de Santa María, and to the west the Atlantic Ocean. From Viveiro you can also go inland, heading south along Route 640, and following the signs to the hamlet of Oral. Or you can take the coastal road east from Viveiro, signposted RIBADEO. Ribadeo is too built up to interest most cyclists but, depending on your stamina, you can cycle to the seaside villages of San Ciprian, Burella, and Foz.

Leaving A Coruña, take the coastal road west (Hwy. 552), heading first to the road junction of **Carballo,** a distance of 36km (22 miles). From this little town, many of the small coastal harbors are within an easy drive. **Malpica,** to the northwest, is the most interesting, with its own beach. An offshore seabird sanctuary exists off this former whaling port. From Malpica, continue to the tiny village of **Corme** at Punta Roncudo. This sheltered fishing village draws summer beach fans to its isolated sand dunes.

From Corme, continue along the winding roads to the whitewashed village of **Camariñas ★**, which stands on the *ría* of the same name. Camariñas is known as a village of expert lace makers, and you'll see their work for sale in many shops. You can also see historic lacework at the **Museo do Encaixe,** Praza Insuela s/n (www.camarina.net; ✆ **98-173-63-40;** admission 2€). From Camariñas, a road leads all the way to the lighthouse at Cabo Vilán.

The road leads first to **Muxia** (shown on some maps as Mugia), below which stands the lighthouse at Cabo Touriñan. Continue driving south along clearly marked coastal roads that are sometimes perched precariously on cliff tops overlooking the sea. They will lead you to **Corcubión,** a village with a Romanesque church. From here, follow signs that lead you along a lonely southbound secondary road to the end of the line, **Cabo Fisterra,** for a panoramic view. This rocky promontory topped by a lighthouse is one of the westernmost points in continental Europe, explaining its name, "End of the Earth." The sunsets from here are among the most spectacular in the world. The Roman poet Horace said it best: "The brilliant skylight of the sun drags behind it the black night over the fruitful breasts of earth." The bronze hiking boot mounted near the lighthouse commemorates the fact that diehard Santiago pilgrims continue walking from the cathedral to this distant westward point.

Where to Eat Along the Coast

Nito ★ SEAFOOD Established in the early 1970s, this restaurant is in the center of Viveiro, only 90m (295 ft.) from the beach, with a sweeping view of the Atlantic. It starts serving dinner early (for Spain, that is; 8:30pm) and maintains a nice balance between price and quality. The food is unpretentious but flavorful. Shellfish is the specialty, but you can order grilled sea bream or even beefsteak. Most diners begin their meal with a bowl of *caldo galego,* a traditional soup of meat, beans, and vegetables. A full range of wines is offered. Diners wanting to eat outside can sit on a terrace with a garden view.

In the Hotel Ego, Playa de Area 1, Viveiro. www.hotelego.es. ✆ **98-256-09-87.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 23€–50€. MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

Meson O Pote ★ GALICIAN/TAPAS This traditional tavern serves market cuisine that relies both on the sea and the pasture. The chef won the prize for best *tortilla de patatas* (potato omelet) in Spain in 2011, and serves it as the first course on the otherwise ever-changing daily menu. Look for Carril clams and octopus to be available daily, while goose barnacles and the delicate little shrimp from Finisterre tend to be specials, as is an appetizer of sea urchin roe. Among the meat dishes, look for delectable stewed pork with turnip greens or roasted wild boar with local chestnuts.

1 Travesía del Progreso 9, Betanzos. www.mesonopote.com. ✆ **98-177-04-14.** Main courses 10€–20€; set menu 16€. MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight.

RÍAS BAIXAS ★★

37km (23 miles) W of Santiago de Compostela, 632km (393 miles) NW of Madrid

After Cabo Fisterra, some of the most dramatic coastal scenery in Spain flanks coastal N-550, following the edge of one of the most tortuous shorelines in Europe. Four estuaries, collectively called the Rías Baixas (Rías Bajas in Castilian, though no Spaniard uses the term), face the Atlantic from Cape Silleiro to Baiona to Point Louro in Muros. Two of these are in the province of Pontevedra (Ría de Pontevedra and Ría de Vigo); one is in the province of A Coruña (Ría de Muros y Noia); and one (Ría de Arousa) divides its shores between the two provinces. The 32km (20-mile) Vigo estuary is the longest, stretching from Ponte Sampasio to Baiona.

Exploring from Muros to Santa Uxea de Ribeira

The seaside town of **Muros** has many old houses and a harbor, but **Noia** (also spelled Noya), to the southeast, is more impressive. If you don't have a car but would like to see at least one or two *ría* fishing villages, you can do so at either Noya or Muros: Both are on a bus route connecting them with Santiago de Compostela. **Monbus** (www.monbus.es; ✆ **98-229-29-00**) runs 11 buses per day from Santiago to Noia, and 9 to Muros. Some of the tiny villages and beaches are connected by bus routes. Rates are in the 14€ to 17€ range.

The entire trip is only 76km (47 miles); driving at a leisurely pace it should take you 2 hours. Noia has a number of interesting, handsome old churches, including the 14th-century **Igrexa de Santa María** (with tombstones dating from the 10th c.) and **Igrexa de San Francisco.** A lot of good beaches lie on the northern bank of the *ría* near Muros. Noia is your best bet for a lunch stop.

From Noia, the coast road (N-550) continues west to **Porto do Son.** You can take a detour to Cabo de Corrubedo, with its lighthouse, before continuing on to Santa Uxea de Ribeira at the southern tip. Ribeira is a fishing port and a canning center. At **Santa Uxea de Ribeira** you'll see Ría de Arousa, the largest and deepest of the inlets.

From Ribeira, continue east along the southern coastal road to **A Puebla de Caramiñal.** From here, take a marked route 10km (6¼ miles) inland into the mountains to the **Mirador de la Curota ★★** to admire the most magnificent panorama in all of *rías* country. The four inlets of the Rías Baixas can, under the right conditions, be seen from this 498m (1,634-ft.) belvedere. In clear weather you can view Cabo Fisterra.

Back on N-550, drive as far as Padrón, where, it is claimed, the legendary sea vessel arrived bringing Santiago (St. James) to Spain. Padrón was also the home of romantic poet Rosalía de Castro (1837–85), sometimes called the Emily Dickinson of Spain. Her house, **Casa-Museo Rosalía de Castro,** Carretera de Hebrón (www.rosaliadecastro.org; ✆ **98-181-12-04**), is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 7pm, and Sunday 10am to 1:30pm. Admission is 1.50€. Padrón also makes a good lunch stop.

From Padrón, follow the purported trail of the body of St. James north along N-550 to Santiago de Compostela, or take N-550 south to Pontevedra.

Where to Stay & Eat

Chef Rivera ★ 🎁 GALICIAN Known to everyone in town simply as El Chef, José Antonio Rivera turns his classical Continental training to the ingredients of seaside Padrón. He's not above using a little Armagnac to brighten his terrine of black truffles and foie gras. He makes good use of the town's signature conical sweet green peppers, *pimientos de Padrón,* as a bed beneath braised monkfish. He also serves the peppers sautéed in olive oil. Be careful—about one pepper in five is very spicy. You might finish your meal with lemon mousse, or with Rivera's own concoction of warm crepes wrapped around nougat ice cream and hazelnut praline mousse. His wife, Pierrette Armero, attends to service in the dining room, which resembles an English pub with its dark, warm colors and leather upholstery.

Enlace Parque 7, Padrón. www.chefrivera.com. ✆ **98-181-04-13.** Fax 98-181-14-54. Reservations recommended. Main courses 14€–24€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 9–11pm. Closed Sun–Mon nights in winter.

PONTEVEDRA ★

58km (36 miles) S of Santiago de Compostela, 839km (521 miles) NW of Madrid

An aristocratic old Spanish town on the Lérez River and the capital of Pontevedra province, the city of Pontevedra still has vestiges of an ancient wall that once encircled the town. In medieval days, the town was called Pontis Veteris (Old Bridge).

Sheltered at the end of the Pontevedra Ría, the city was a bustling port, and foreign merchants mingled with local traders, seamen, and fishermen. It was the home of Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, the 16th-century navigator and cosmographer who wrote *Voyage to the Magellan Straits.* In the 18th century, the Lérez delta silted up and the busy commerce moved elsewhere, mainly to Vigo. Pontevedra entered a period of decline, which may account for its significant old section. Had it been a more prosperous town, the people might have torn down the ancient structures to rebuild.

The old barrio, a maze of colonnaded squares and cobbled alleyways, is between Calle Michelena and Calle del Arzobispo Malvar, stretching to Calle Cobián and the river. The old mansions, called *pazos,* evoke former maritime glory, as it was the sea that provided the money to build them. Seek out such charming squares as Praza de la Leña, Praza de Mugártegui, and Praza de Teucro.

Essentials

GETTING THERE From Santiago de Compostela in the north, 14 to 17 **trains** per day make the 1½-hour one-way trip to Pontevedra at a cost of 6€. **RENFE** has an office on Praza Calvo Sotelo s/n (www.renfe.es; ✆ **90-232-03-20**), where you can get information. The actual rail and bus stations are .8km (½ mile) from the town center on Alféreces Provisionales.

Pontevedra has good links to major Galician cities. From Vigo in the south, **bus** travel time is only 1 hour if you take one of the 12 inland expresses leaving from Vigo daily; the one-way fare is 6.50€. From Santiago de Compostela in the north, a bus leaves every hour during the day for Pontevedra (1 hr.); the one-way trip costs 9.50€. For information, visit www.monbus.es or call ✆ **98-229-29-00.**

If you're driving from Santiago de Compostela, head south along N-550 to reach Pontevedra.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Xral. Gutiérrez Mellado 1 (www.turgalicia.es; ✆ **98-685-08-14;** fax 98-684-81-23), is open July to September Monday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm, and Sunday 10am to 2pm. From October to June, it is open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, and Saturday 10am to 12:30pm.

SPECIAL EVENTS The town is host to two popular festivals, including the week-long **La Virgen de la Peregrina (the Pilgrim's Virgin),** which takes place in the historic Old Town beginning the second Sunday in August. The celebration features religious street processions, live entertainment, food vendors, and kiosks selling handicrafts and antiques. An entrance charge may be applied for certain cultural performances, but concerts sponsored by the city are free. Another good time to visit is for the medieval fair, **Feria Franca,** occurring in the historic district on the first Friday afternoon in September and extending to Saturday night. People dress up in medieval costumes and enjoy live music, parades, and even food of the era.

Exploring Pontevedra

In the **Old Quarter ★**, the major attraction is the **Basílica de Santa María la Mayor ★**, Calle del Arzobispo Malvar (✆ **98-686-61-85**), with its avocado green patina, dating from the 16th century. Its most remarkable feature is its west front, carved to resemble an altarpiece, with a depiction of the Crucifixion at the top. The church is open daily 10am to 1pm and 5 to 9pm.

The **Museo de Pontevedra,** Pasantería 10 (www.museo.depontevedra.es; ✆ **98-685-14-55**), with a hodgepodge of everything from the Pontevedra attic, contains displays ranging from prehistoric artifacts to a still life by Zurbarán. Many of the exhibits are maritime oriented, and there is a valuable collection of jewelry. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm,

The Old Quarter of Pontevedra.

Sunday 11am to 2pm. Admission is free. The museum opens onto a major square in the Old Town, Praza de Leña (Square of Wood).

Iglesia de San Francisco, Praza de la Herrería, is another church of note. Its Gothic facade opens onto gardens. It was founded in the 14th century and contains a sculpture of Don Payo Gómez Charino, noted for his part in the 1248 Reconquest of Sevilla, when it was wrested from Muslim domination.

Directly south, the gardens lead to the 18th-century **Capilla de la Peregrina,** Praza Peregrina, with a narrow half-moon facade connected to a rotunda and crowned by a pair of towers. It was constructed by followers of the cult of the Pilgrim's Virgin, which was launched in Galicia sometime in the 17th century.

Where to Eat

Alameda 10 GALICIAN/SEAFOOD Set within a 70-year-old stone-sided building in the town's historic core, this is a restaurant known by virtually everyone in town as a well-managed, straightforward refuge of comfort and fresh, well-prepared food. Come here for a salad of wild greens and braised filet of *lubina* (sea bass), a ragout of shrimp and barnacles studded with strips of turbot, or a breast and thigh of duckling served *en confit* in a style that might remind you of something you'd find in France. Dining areas evoke old Spain, with exposed stone, woodwork, and a hardworking staff.

Alameda 10. www.restaurantealameda10.com. ✆ **98-685-74-12.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–30€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–4pm; Mon and Wed–Sat 9–11:30pm.

Casa Román GALICIAN Known for the quality of its shellfish, this long-established restaurant is on the street level of a brick apartment building in a leafy downtown development known as Campolongo, near Praza de Galicia. To reach the dining room, you pass through a tavern. In addition to lobster (which you can see in the window), a wide array of well-prepared fish and shellfish dishes is served here, including sea bass, squid, sole, crab, and tuna.

Augusto García Sánchez 12. www.casaroman.com. ✆ **98-684-35-60.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 14€–25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–3:45pm; Tues–Sat 9–11:45pm.

Solla ★★★ 🎁 GALICIAN In business for nearly half a century, this is an old-time favorite that showcases the culinary imagination of current chef-owner, the young Pepe Solla, whom some consider the best chef in Galicia. A self-taught chef, he considers himself in the vanguard of *cocina de autur,* which means he creates his own recipes, in this case inspired by the Galician kitchen where he grew up. Whatever he serves, Solla imbues it with his own taste, style, and flavor. He cooks freshly caught Galician sole and a filet mignon in an Albariño wine sauce—both are delights. Gourmets drive from considerable distances to sample two of his specialties, including hake cooked *sous vide* and served with an almond-flavored cream sauce, or slow-roasted wild Iberian boar that's deboned after 12 hours and "finished" on a charcoal grill. One of the most delightful finishes to a meal is the fresh figs of summer served with Cabrales cheese.

Av. Sineiro 7, Km 2, San Salvador de Poio, 2km (1¼ miles) from the center of town, toward O Grove. www.restaurantesolla.com. ✆ **98-687-28-84.** Reservations recommended. Fixed-price menus 69€–94€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 1:30–4pm and 9–11:30pm; Thurs and Sun 1:30–4pm. Closed Dec 20–Jan 4.

Entertainment & Nightlife

The cool temperatures that descend over the hot, sultry plain surrounding Pontevedra seem to incite local residents into after-dark promenades through the Old City. You'll find pubs and bars sprawled on either side of the streets that interconnect Praza Santa María la Mayor, in the northwestern quadrant of the town's historic core, with the very central Praza de la Herrería. By midnight on the weekends, rhythmic electronic music emanates from the town's most popular disco, **Carabas,** Calle Cobián Roffignac 6 (www.carabasdisco.com; ✆ **98-686-26-95**). Carabas appeals to high-energy dance freaks in their early 20s. Don't even think of heading off to a Pontevedra disco before midnight, as it's likely to be locked. On the other hand, the music keeps pumping until 4am. Expect cover charges around 10€, depending on the night of the week.

Where to Stay

Hotel Rías Bajas On a busy street corner near Praza de Galicia in the commercial center, this 1960s hotel is more comfortable than you might expect, judging from the outside. The largest hotel in town, it is often used for community political meetings and press conferences. The lobby, with stone and wood paneling, has been designed to look like an English club. The midsize guest rooms are comfortable and well maintained.

Daniel de la Sota 7, 36001 Pontevedra. www.hotelriasbajas.com. ✆ **98-685-51-00.** Fax 98-685-51-50. 100 units. 45€–100€ double; 75€–116€ triple. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* TV, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Virgen del Camino On a relatively quiet street off Highway C-531, at the edge of the suburbs, this stucco hotel with balconies contains comfortable English-style sitting rooms. The midsize guest rooms have wall-to-wall carpeting and first-rate bathrooms. The best doubles contain separate salons and sitting rooms.

Virgen del Camino 55, 36001 Pontevedra. www.hotelvirgendelcamino.com. ✆ **98-685-59-00.** Fax 98-685-09-00. 52 units. 67€–96€ double; 105€–135€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 11€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Parador de Pontevedra ★★ This *parador* is in the Old Quarter of Pontevedra, in a well-preserved 16th-century palace near the Basílica de Santa María la Mayor. Built on either 13th- or 14th-century foundations, this hotel became one of Spain's first *paradores* when it opened in 1955. The interior has been maintained very much as the old *pazo* (manor house) looked. It includes a quaint old kitchen, or *lar* (heart), typical of Galician country houses and furnished with characteristic items. Off the vestibule is a courtyard dominated by a large old stone staircase. Many of the attractively furnished guest rooms are large enough to include sitting areas. Many also overlook the walled-in formal garden.

Calle Barón 19, 36002 Pontevedra. www.parador.es. ✆ **98-685-58-00.** Fax 98-685-21-95. 47 units. 80€–120€ double; 198€–250€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Limited free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

O GROVE & A TOXA ★

636km (395 miles) NW of Madrid, 32km (20 miles) W of Pontevedra, 73km (45 miles) S of Santiago de Compostela

A summer resort and fishing village with 8km (5 miles) of beaches of varying quality, O Grove (El Grove in Castilian) sits on a peninsula west of Pontevedra. It juts into the Ría de Arousa, a large inlet at the mouth of the Ulla River. The village has become more commercial than many visitors would like, but it is still renowned for fine cuisine. A shellfish festival is held here every October.

A Toxa (La Toja in Castilian), an island linked to O Grove by bridge, is a famous spa and the most fashionable resort in Galicia, known for its sports and leisure activities. The casino and the golf course are both very popular. The island is covered with pine trees and surrounded by some of the finest scenery in Spain. A Toxa first became known for health-giving properties when, according to legend, the owner of a sick donkey left it on the island to die. The donkey recovered, and its cure was attributed to the waters of an island spring.

A deserted beach in O Grove.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The **train** from Santiago de Compostela goes as far as Vilagarcía de Arousa; take the bus from there. For train schedules, visit www.renfe.es or call ✆ **90-232-03-20.**

From Pontevedra, **buses** heading for Ponte Vilagarcía de Arousa stop at La Toja. Contact Monbus (www.monbus.es; ✆ **98-229-29-00**) for details. A one-way fare costs 6.50€.

If you're driving, head east from Pontevedra on the 550 coastal road via Sanxenxo. From Santiago de Compostela, expressway A-9 leads to Caldas de Reis, where you turn off onto the 550, heading west to the coast.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** Praza Do Corgo s/n (www.turismogrove.com; ✆ **98-673-14-15**), is open in winter Monday and Wednesday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 4 to 6pm, Tuesday and Sunday 11am to 2pm (closed Mon in summer).

Where to Stay & Eat

IN O GROVE

Hotel Amandi This stylish and tasteful family-run hotel is a brisk 10-minute walk from the bridge that connects O Grove with A Toxa. The midsize rooms are decorated with antique reproductions; most have tiny terraces with ornate cast-iron balustrades and sea views. Breakfast is the only meal served.

Castelao 94, 36980 O Grove. www.hotelamandi.com. ✆ **98-673-19-42.** Fax 98-673-16-43. 30 units. 100€–180€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. Parking 10€. Closed Jan. **Amenities:** Outdoor pool; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* TV.

La Posada del Mar SEAFOOD This warm, inviting place near the bridge leading to A Toxa is the best dining spot besides those at the hotels. At times you can watch women digging for oysters in the river in front. The chef, naturally, specializes in fish, including a wide selection of shellfish. Among the specialties are a savory soup, outstanding shellfish rice, Galician-style hake, fresh grilled salmon, and an empanada filled with scallops in cream sauce. For dessert, try the quince tart.

Castelao 202, O Grove. ✆ **98-673-01-06.** Reservations required July–Aug. Main courses 10€–24€; fixed-price menus 26€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm; Tues–Sat 8:30pm–midnight. Closed mid-Dec to Jan.

IN A TOXA

Hesperia Isla La Toja ★★ Enveloped by pine trees on well-landscaped grounds, this classic spa hotel lies on a breeze-swept island off O Grove. The guest rooms—try for one with a view—are both modern and functional, as well as immaculately kept. They come with some of the best bathrooms in the area, with both tub and shower. A year-round resort, the Isla La Toja has some of the best facilities and amenities in the area, ranging from a first-rate spa to a 9-hole golf course and even a casino. The Galician food is served in three restaurants, depending on season, and emphasizes the fresh fish and shellfish harvested off the coast of Galicia. Local Rías Baixa white wines, based on the Albariño grape, pair well with most dishes.

Isla de la Toja s/n, 36991 Isla de la Toja, Pontevedra. www.granhotelhesperia-latoja.com. ✆ **98-673-00-50.** Fax 98-673-01-01. 197 units. 50€–165€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; 9-hole golf course (nearby); health club; 2 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; 3 outdoor tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Louxo La Toja Set on flatlands a few paces from the town's ornate casino is this modern white building, sheltered from the Atlantic winds. It offers clean, stylish, and modern accommodations; most rooms are midsize. Each comes with a neatly kept bathroom. The many ground-floor public rooms have rows of comfortable seating areas and sweeping views over the nearby tidal flats.

O Grove s/n, 36991 Isla de la Toja, Pontevedra. www.louxolatoja.com. ✆ **98-673-02-00.** Fax 98-673-27-91. 116 units. 46€–130€ double; 112€–180€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

GALICIA'S SOUTHWEST COAST

65km (40 miles) S of Vigo, 90km (56 miles) S of Pontevedra

The coastline from the Ría de Vigo to the Río Miño, which forms the border between Spain and Portugal, is steeped in history and blessed with a climate that favors the cultivation of Albariño grapes. Some of the Galicia's finest Rías Baixas wines are grown in vineyards that come right up the edges of the coastal road. It is also an area with some of the greatest fishing ports in the world, and consequently some of the best casual fish restaurants in Spain. A drive through the region is highly recommended for an easy taste of gastronomic tourism at its best.

Exploring the Southwest Coast

Begin at the village of **Baiona ★**, 57km (36 miles) south of Pontevedra. This deep harbor on the southern lip of the Ría Vigo was an important medieval cargo port. Its moment of enduring fame, however, came on March 1, 1493, when Columbus's vessel, *La Pinta,* made landfall here. (The navigator was from Baiona, which became the first place in Europe to learn of the Columbus's discoveries across the Atlantic Ocean.) A replica **Carabela *Pinta*** (✆ **98-668-70-67**) constructed for the quincentennial bobs in the harbor among power cruisers and recreational sailboats. Board from the main quay of town. The ship is open daily 11am to 2pm and 4:30 to 7:30pm; admission is 1€.

Just above the harbor stand the picket-fence stone walls of Baiona's **Fortaleza de Monterreal** (✆ **98-668-70-67**). The fort was constructed fitfully from the 12th century onward but was completed in the early 1600s. Its 3km (1.9 miles) of walls wrap around the headland above the harbor. It is open daily 10am to 9pm, and admission is 1€.

As you drive south on the PO-552 from Baiona, there are several pull-outs along the road to allow you to enjoy the dramatic views of waves crashing on the rocky coastline. In 30km (19 miles), the fishing port of **A Guarda ★** (La Garda in Castilian) nestles in a deep cove at the mouth of the Río Miño. This ancient Celtic port predates the Roman presence and now is home to Europe's most important swordfish fleet. Pastel houses, restaurants, and bars form a Cubist wall around the harbor. Along the docks, fishermen mend their nets, and neatly stacked wire lobster and crab traps sit beneath protective tarps.

The Paseo Marítimo leads to the breakwater, with a walkway along the top, and to the tiny **Museo do Mar** (✆ **98-661-00-00**) in a replica of the cannon emplacement that once guarded A Guarda. Exhibits include aquarium tanks and good explication of traditional local fishing equipment and vessels. The free museum is open mid-September to early June Saturday and Sunday 11am to 2pm and 4 to 7pm; hours early June to mid-September are daily 11am to 2pm and 6 to 9pm.

If seeing the fishing fleet makes you hungry, head to the road above the harbor for grilled swordfish or rice and shellfish casseroles at **Xeito Restaurante Mariquería,** Av. Fernández Albor 19 (✆ **98-661-04-74**). The restaurant on the rocky headland has outdoor tables for taking in the view. It's open daily for lunch and dinner. Main dishes cost 15€ to 30€.

The highway turns north at A Guarda to follow the Río Miño toward Túi. In about 11km (7miles), you reach the important D.O. Wine District known as

O Rosal (a subdivision of Rías Baixas). The highway suddenly sprouts side roads leading to vineyards. Grapes line the roadside in tracts as small as backyard gardens and as big as fields reaching over the hillside. The dominant grape is Albariño, which makes a fruit-forward, slightly acidic wine with a long finish for which the Rías Baixas region is justifiably famous among wine lovers. Several winemakers in O Rosal offer tastings, including **Bodegas Terras Gauda,** PO-552 Km 55 (www.terrasgauda.com; ✆ **98-662-10-01**). The tasting room is open Monday to Saturday 11am to 2pm and 4 to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm. Free winery tours are offered Monday to Saturday at 5:30pm and Sunday at 12:30pm. The cathedral city of Túi lies about 16km (10 miles) north.

TUI ★

29km (18 miles) S of Vigo, 48km (30 miles) S of Pontevedra

A frontier town first settled by the Romans, Tui (Tuy in Castilian) is a short distance from Portugal, near the two-tiered road-and-rail bridge (over the Río Miño) that links the two countries. The bridge was designed by Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel. (He designed a tower in Paris you may have heard of.) If you're driving from Portugal's Valença do Minho, Tui is your introduction to Spain.

Essentials

GETTING THERE There is twice-daily train service to Tui from Vigo. The trip takes about 40 minutes and costs 3.35€. From Vigo, **buses** run south to Tui hourly, taking 1 hour (3€). If you're driving from Vigo, head south along the A-9 expressway until you see the turnoff for Tui.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Rua Colón s/n, Edificio Sampaio (✆ **98-660-17-89**), is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 6:30pm, Saturday 10am to noon.

The Eiffel bridge outside Tui.

Exploring Tui

The winding streets of the Old Quarter lead to the **Catedral ★**, a national art treasure that dominates the *zona monumental*. The acropolis-like cathedral/fortress, built in 1170, wasn't used for religious purposes until the early 13th century. Later architects respected the original Romanesque and Gothic styles and made few changes in its design. If you have time, you may want to visit the Romanesque-style **Iglesia de San Bartolomé** on the outskirts of town, and the **Iglesia de Santo Domingo,** a beautiful example of Gothic style. (Look for the bas-reliefs in the cloister.) The churches are open to the public in summer. The latter church stands next to Santo Domingo Park. Walls built over Roman fortifications surround Tui.

Where to Stay & Eat

Parador de Tui ★★ ☺ Advance reservations are essential if you want to stay in this elegant, fortress-style hacienda four streets north of the Río Miño crossing. Built in 1968, the inn was designed to blend with the architectural spirit of the province, emphasizing local stone and natural woods. Brass chandeliers, paintings by well-known Galegos, and antiques combined with reproductions furnish the public rooms. In the main living room are a large inglenook fireplace, a tall banjo-shaped grandfather clock, hand-knotted rugs, hand-hewn benches, and comfortable armchairs. The midsize guest rooms are sober in style, but are comfortable and offer views across a colonnaded courtyard to the river and hills. They are furnished with Castilian-style pieces.

Av. de Portugal s/n, 36700 Túy. www.parador.es. ✆ **98-660-03-00.** Fax 98-660-21-63. 30 units. 85€–277€ double; 180€–394€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; children's center; outdoor pool; room service; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (2€ per hr.).

19

THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

The Balearic Islands (Los Baleares)—an archipelago of the major islands of Mallorca, Menorca, and Ibiza, plus the diminutive Formentera, Cabrera, and uninhabited Dragonera—lie off the coast of Spain, between France and the coast of northern Africa. The islands have been ruled and occupied by Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, and Moors. But despite a trove of Bronze Age megaliths and some fine Punic artifacts, the invaders who have left the largest imprint on Balearic culture are the sun-seeking vacationers who descend every year.

After Jaume I expelled the Moors in 1229, the islands flourished as the kingdom of Mallorca, but declined after being integrated into the kingdom of Castilla in the mid-14th century. The early 19th century provided a renaissance, as artists such as George Sand, Chopin, and later, poet Robert Graves established the islands as a haven for musicians, writers, and artists. Gradually the artists' colony attracted tourists of all dispositions.

Very few visitors have time to explore all three major islands, so you'll have to decide early which one is for you. **Mallorca,** the largest, is the most commercial and touristy, with much of its scenery lost to sprawling hotels and fast-food joints. Freewheeling **Ibiza** attracts the international party crowd, as well as seekers of white-sand beaches and sky-blue waters. The smallest of the major islands, **Menorca,** is the most serene. It is less touristy than Mallorca and Ibiza, and for that reason it is now experiencing an "anti-tourist" tourist boom. The government of the islands has recently safeguarded 35% of this island group from further development.

THE best TRAVEL EXPERIENCES IN THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

- **Driving the twisting high roads of Cap de Formentor:** Mallorca's northernmost cape packs a steep Moorish mountain village and a pocket fishing town nestled in a mountain-wrapped cove—even a pilgrimage monastery—into one short but exhilarating drive.
- **Swimming and sunbathing on Ibiza's white-sand beaches:** You might prefer the convenience of Ses Figueretes on the bus line near Ciudad de Ibiza, or the more officially nudist scene at Playa Cavallet and Aigües Blanques. (Either way, remember the sunscreen.)
- **Stepping back in time at Naveta d'es Tudons:** The megalithic constructions on Menorca hint at the sophisticated culture that inhabited the Balearics in the centuries before Europeans or North Africans reached the islands. This great stone boat burial complex shows off their complex engineering.

PREVIOUS PAGE: **Cala'n Porter beach, on Menorca.**

- **Savoring a caldereta de langosta in Fornells:** The thick stew of Menorca's blue spiny lobster with tomatoes, onions, green peppers, garlic, and an anise liqueur is the signature pot in Fornells. The perfect accompaniment is a white wine from Binissalem vinted from the indigenous Moll grape.
- **Greeting dawn at a Palma dance club:** If you have the stamina, you can literally dance all night at the clubs of Palma. Just remember your sunglasses so that you're not blinded when you stumble out the door at 6am.

MALLORCA ★★★

Mallorca (also spelled "Majorca") is the most popular of Spain's Mediterranean islands, drawing millions of visitors each year. About 209km (130 miles) from Barcelona and 145km (90 miles) from Valencia, Mallorca has a coastline 500km (311 miles) long. An explorer's paradise in its exterior, it's overbuilt along certain coastal regions. The north is mountainous; the fertile southern flatlands offer olive and almond groves interrupted by windmills.

The golden sands of Mallorca are famous, with lovely beaches such as Ca'n Pastilla and El Arenal, but tend to fill with package tourists. Both Cala Mayor and Sant Agustí have good beaches, including Playa Magaluf, the longest beach on the Calvía coast. Cala de San Vicente, 6.5km (4 miles) north of Pollença, is a beautiful beach bordered by a pine grove and towering cliffs. Stretches of golden beach lie between Cala Pi and Cala Murta in Formentor.

Essentials

GETTING THERE If you're coming in August, make sure you have a reserved return ticket. There are no empty airplane or ferry seats.

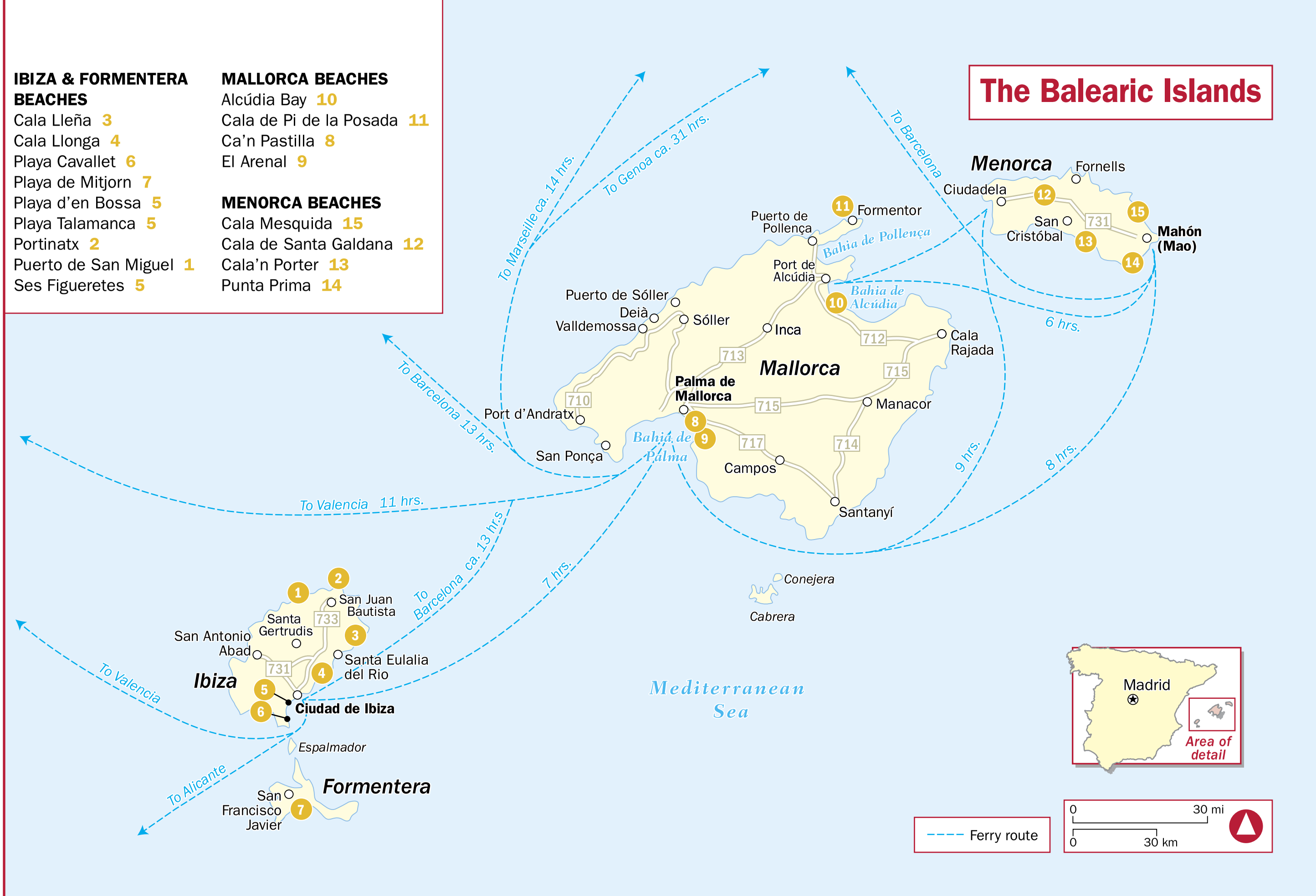
Iberia (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) flies to Palma's **Aeroport Son San Joan** (✆ **90-240-47-04**) from Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid. There are daily planes from Madrid and Valencia, and several daily flights from Barcelona in summer. **Air Europa** (www.aireuropa.com; ✆ **90-240-15-01**) flies to Palma from Barcelona (twice daily in peak season) and less frequently from Madrid and Sevilla. Countless charter flights also make the run. Bookings are very tight in August, and delays of at least 24 hours (or more) are common. From the airport, bus no. 1 takes you to Plaça Espanya in the center of Palma from 6am to 1:50am daily; the cost is 2€. A metered cab charges from 25€ for the 25-minute drive into the city.

Not an Island for All Seasons

July and August are high season for Mallorca; don't even think of coming then without a reservation. It's possible to swim comfortably from June to October; after that, it's prohibitively cold and many hotels and restaurants close until May.

Trasmediterránea, Estació Marítim in Palma (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **90-245-46-45**), operates a daily **ferry** from Barcelona (trip time: 3½ hr.), from 56€ one-way. There are six ferries per week from Valencia, Monday to Saturday, taking 7 hours and costing 56€ one-way. (A faster boat takes 4–6 hr. and costs 120€.) In Barcelona, tickets can be booked at the Trasmediterránea office at Estació Marítim (✆ **90-245-46-45**), and in Valencia at the office at Terminal Trasmediterráneo Muelle Deponiente, Estacio Marítima (✆ **90-245-46-45**).

The Balearic Islands


Menorca
Fornells
Ciudadela
San Cristóbal
Mahón (Mao)
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13
14
15
To Barcelona
Puerto de Pollença
Formentor
11
Bahia de Pollença
Port de Alcúdia
Bahia de Alcúdia
10
Puerto de Sóller
Deià
Valldemossa
Sóller
Inca
Cala Rajada
712
713
715
Mallorca
Palma de Mallorca
Manacor
710
Port d'Andratx
San Ponça
Bahia de Palma
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9
717
714
Campos
Santanyí
6 hrs.
9 hrs.
8 hrs.
To Marseille ca. 14 hrs.
To Genoa ca. 31 hrs.
To Barcelona 13 hrs.
To Valencia 11 hrs.
To Barcelona ca. 13 hrs.
7 hrs.
Conejera
Cabrera
Mediterranean Sea
1
2
San Juan Bautista
Santa Gertrudis
733
3
San Antonio Abad
731
4
Santa Eulalia del Rio
Ibiza
5
6
Ciudad de Ibiza
To Valencia
Espalmador
Formentera
To Alicante
San Francisco Javier
7
Madrid
Area of detail
Ferry route
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30 mi
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30 km

IBIZA & FORMENTERA BEACHES	
Cala Lleña	3
Cala Llonga	4
Playa Cavallet	6
Playa de Mitjorn	7
Playa d'en Bossa	5
Playa Talamanca	5
Portinatx	2
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GETTING AROUND At the tourist office in Palma, you can pick up a **bus** schedule that explains island routes. Or call **Empresa Municipal de Transportes** (www.emtpalma.es; ✆ **97-121-44-44**). This company runs city buses from its main terminal, Estació Central D'Autobus, Plaça Espanya. The standard one-way fare is 1.25€ within Palma; at the station you can buy a booklet good for 10 rides, costing 8€. Some of the most frequented bus routes include transportation from Palma to the Coves del Drac; the one-way trip takes 1 hour and costs 9.50€. Other popular routes go to Dexa (45 min.; 6€ one-way), and to Valldemossa (30 min.; 4€ one-way).

Ferrocarril de Sóller, Carrer Eusebio Estada 1 (www.trendesoller.com; ✆ **97-175-20-51**), off Plaça Espanya, has **train** service through majestic mountain scenery to Sóller. One train goes from Palma to Soller daily from 8am to 7pm, also stopping at Mirador Del Pujol D'en Banya. The ticket costs 10€.

If you plan to stay in Palma, you don't need a car. If you'd like to take our driving tour, you can rent cars at such companies as **Europcar,** at the airport terminal (www.europcar.com; ✆ **90-210-50-55**), where rentals range from 47€ to 241€ per day. **Avis** at the airport terminal (www.avis.com; ✆ **90-211-02-61**) is well stocked; its rates range from 58€ to 180€ per day. Reservations are essential.

Palma de Mallorca ★★

Palma, on the southern tip of the island, is the seat of government and has the lion's share of Mallorca's hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. The Moors constructed Palma in the style of a casbah, or walled city. Its foundations are still visible, although obscured by the high-rise hotels.

The area immediately surrounding the cathedral epitomizes old Palma. Mazes of narrow alleys and cobblestone streets hark back to when Palma was an important Mediterranean port. Today it is a bustling city supported on tourism. It's estimated that nearly half the island's population lives in Palma. The islanders call Palma simply *Ciutat* (City); it is the largest of the Balearic ports, its bay often clogged with yachts. Arrival by sea is the most impressive, with the skyline characterized by Bellver Castle and the cathedral's bulk.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **National Tourist Office** is in Palma at Plaça Reina 2 (✆ **97-117-39-90**). It's open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 2pm.

GETTING AROUND In Palma, you can get around the Old Town and the Paseo on foot. Otherwise, make limited use of taxis, or take one of the buses that cuts across the city. Out on the island, you'll have to depend mainly on buses or a rental car.

FAST FACTS The **U.S. Consulate,** Edificio Reina Constanza, Porto Pi, B, 9D (✆ **97-140-37-07**), is open Monday to Friday from 10:30am to 1:30pm. The **British Consulate,** Carrer Convent dels Caputxins 4 (✆ **97-171-24-45**), is open from 8:30am to 1:30pm Monday to Friday.

In case of an **emergency,** dial ✆ **112.** If you fall ill, head to **Clínica Rotger,** Calle Santiago Rusiñol 9 (www.clinicarotger.es; ✆ **97-144-85-00**), or **Clínica Juaneda,** Calle Company 30 (www.clinicajuaneda.es; ✆ **97-173-16-47**). Both clinics are open 24 hours.

Mallorca

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Port de Pollença	16
Port de Sóller	12
Raixa	15
Santa Ponça	1
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Son Marroig	9
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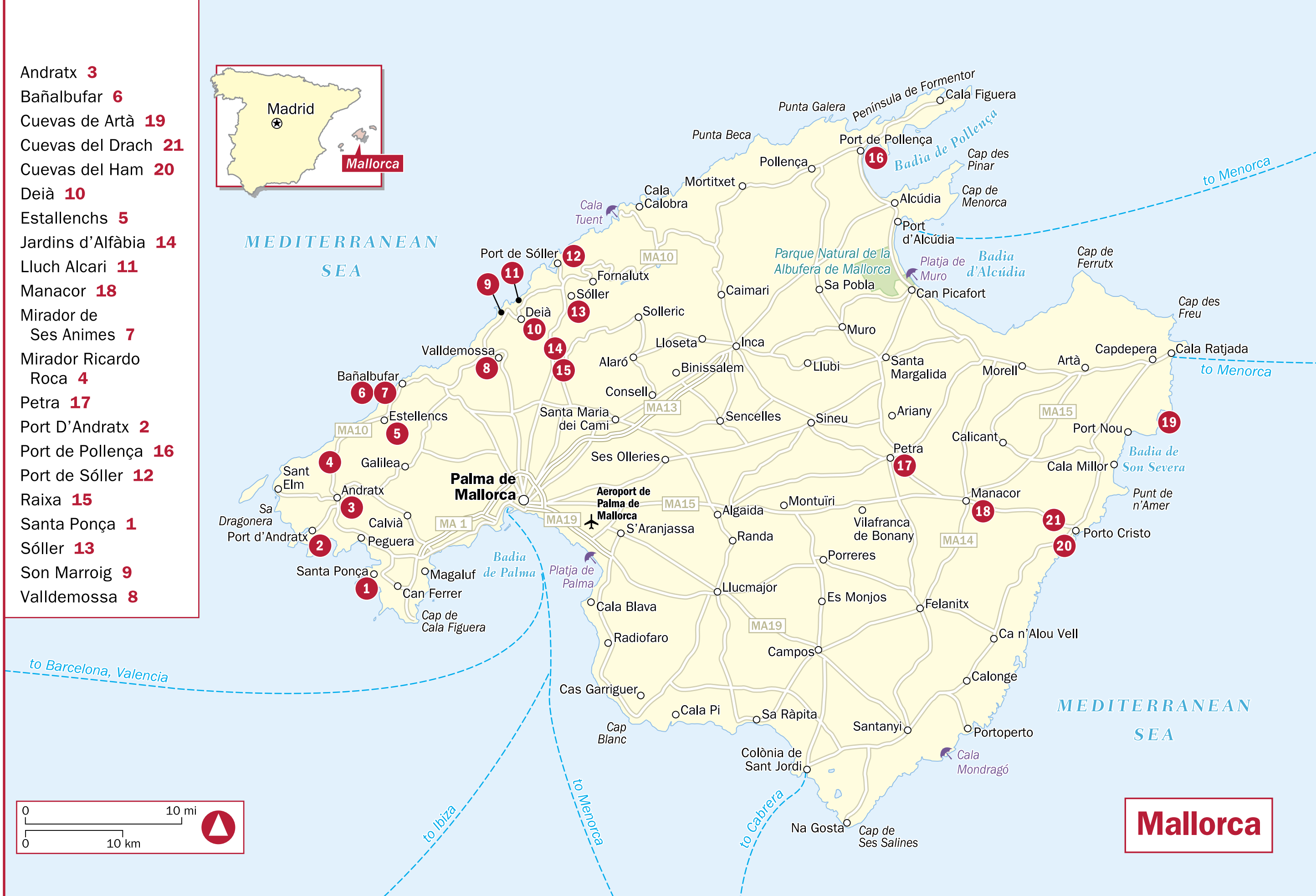
Madrid
Mallorca
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Punta Galera
Península de Formentor
Cala Figuera
Punta Beca
Port de Pollença
Pollença
Badia de Pollença
Cap des Pinar
Cap de Menorca
Alcúdia
Port d'Alcúdia
to Menorca
Mortitxet
Cala Calobra
Cala Tuent
Port de Sóller
Fornalutx
Sóller
Deià
Valldemossa
Bañalbufar
Estellencs
Galilea
Sant Elm
Andratx
Sa Dragonera
Port d'Andratx
Calvià
Peguera
Santa Ponça
Magaluf
Can Ferrer
Cap de Cala Figuera
Badia de Palma
Palma de Mallorca
Aeroport de Palma de Mallorca
Platja de Palma
S'Aranjassa
Cala Blava
Radiofaro
Cas Garriguer
Cap Blanc
Cala Pi
Sa Ràpita
Colònia de Sant Jordi
Na Gosta
Cap de Ses Salines
to Cabrera
to Ibiza
to Menorca
to Barcelona, Valencia
Santa Maria dei Cami
Consell
Binissalem
Alaró
Lloseta
Solleric
Caimari
Inca
Llubi
Sencelles
Sineu
Ses Olleries
Algaida
Randa
Montuïri
Llucmajor
Es Monjos
Porreres
Vilafranca de Bonany
Campos
Santanyi
Parque Natural de la Albufera de Mallorca
Platja de Muro
Badia d'Alcúdia
Sa Pobla
Can Picafort
Muro
Santa Margalida
Ariany
Petra
Cap de Ferrutx
Cap des Freu
Capdepera
Cala Ratjada
Artà
Morell
Port Nou
Calicant
Cala Millor
Badia de Son Severa
Manacor
Punt de n'Amer
Porto Cristo
Felanitx
Ca n'Alou Vell
Calonge
Portoperto
Cala Mondragó
MA10
MA13
MA15
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For **Internet access,** go to **Babaloo Internet Centre,** Calle Verja 2 (www.babalooInternet.com; ✆ **97-195-77-25**), just off Calle Sant Magi. It charges 2€ per hour and is open Monday to Friday 10am to 8pm and Sunday 3 to 8pm. It's closed on Saturday.

Mallorca observes the same **holidays** as the rest of Spain but also celebrates June 29, the Feast of St. Peter, the patron saint of fishermen.

The central **post office** is at Constitución 6 (✆ **97-172-70-54**). Hours are Monday to Friday 8:30am to 8:30pm, and Saturday 9:30am to 2pm.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

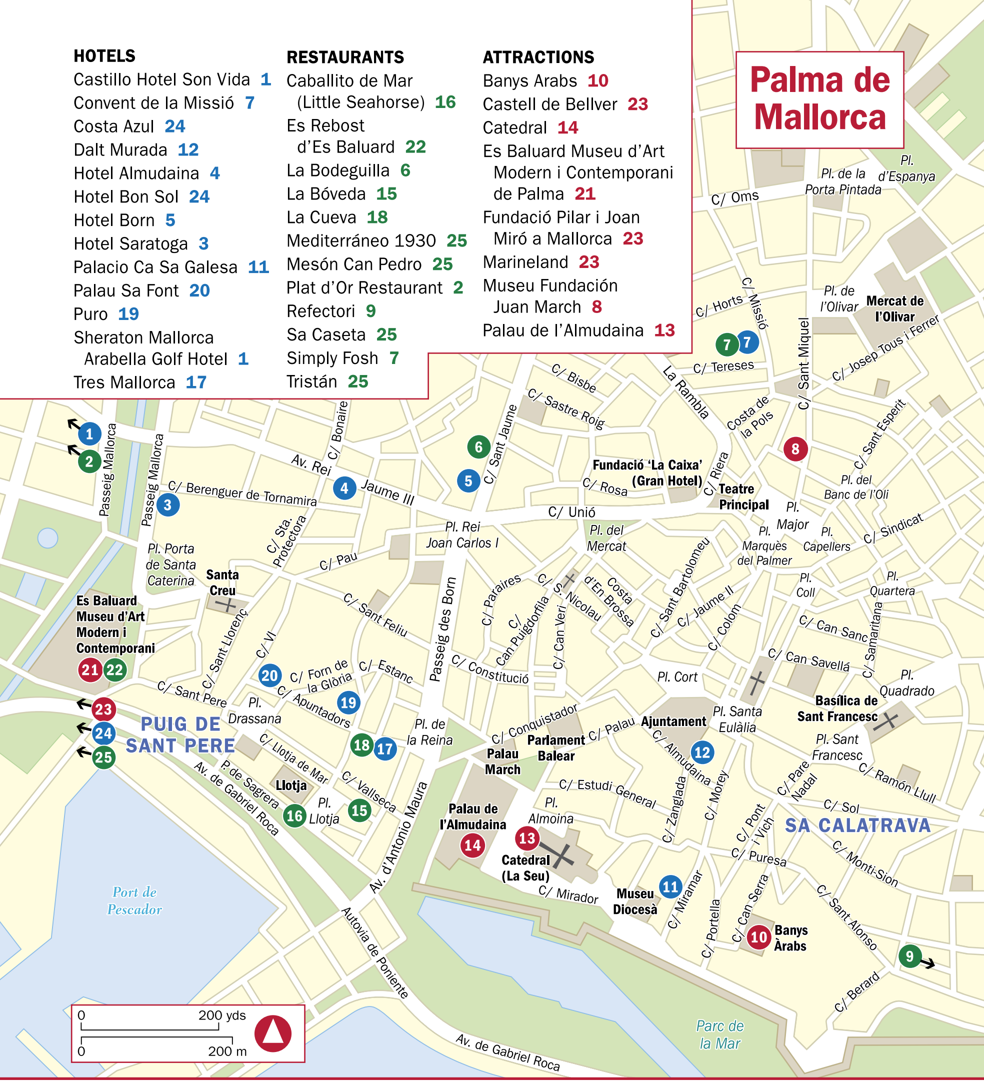
There is a beach near the Palma cathedral, but adjacent foul-smelling (covered) sewers make swimming unappealing. The closest public beach to downtown is **Playa Nova,** a 35-minute bus ride. Some hotels, however, have private beaches. If you head east, you reach the excellent beaches of **Ca'n Pastilla.** The golden-sand beaches at **El Arenal** are very well equipped with tourist facilities. Going to the southwest, you find good but often crowded beaches at **Cala Mayor** and **Sant Agustí.**

Note: You can swim from late June to October; don't believe the promoters who try to sell you on mild Mallorcan winters in January and February—it can get downright cold. Spring and fall can be heaven sent, and in summer the coastal areas are pleasantly cooled by sea breezes.

GOLF Mallorca is a golfer's dream. The best course is **Arabella Golf Son Vida,** Urbanización Son Vida, about 13km (8 miles) east of Palma along the Andrade Highway. This 18-hole course is shared by the island's two best hotels, Sheraton Mallorca Arabella Golf Hotel and Castillo Hotel Son Vida. The course is open to anyone who calls (www.sonvidagolf.com; ✆ **97-179-12-10**). Greens fees are 55€ to 70€ for hotel guests and 75€ to 100€ for nonguests. Golf cart rentals are also available for 45€. There are many golf courses on the island. For information, contact **Federación Balear de Golf,** Av. Jaime III no. 17, in Palma (www.fbgolf.com; ✆ **97-172-27-53**).

GUIDED TOURS **Balearic Discovery,** Calle Jaime Solivellas 11, Selva (www.balearicdiscovery.com; ✆ **97-187-53-95**), offers tailor-made travel services to people who want a unique experience during their time in Mallorca. The company can arrange everything from art tours to windsurfing excursions.

A view of Playa Nova, in Palma.



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C/ Colom
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C/ Can Sanc
C/ Samaritana
C/ Sant Llorenç
C/ VI
C/ Forn de la Glòria
C/ Estanc
C/ Constitució
C/ Can Savellá
Pl. Cort
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Pl. Drassana
C/ Apuntadors
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PUIG DE SANT PERE
Pl. de la Reina
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Palau March
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P. de Sagrera
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C/ Morey
C/ Sol
Palau de l'Almudaina
Pl. Almoina
C/ Pont i Vich
SA CALATRAVA
Av. d'Antonio Maura
Catedral (La Seu)
C/ Puresa
C/ Monti-Sion
C/ Mirador
Museu Diocesà
C/ Miramar
Port de Pescador
Autovia de Poniente
C/ Portella
C/ Can Serra
Banys Àrabs
C/ Sant Alonso
C/ Berard
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HIKING Mallorca's hilly terrain makes for better hiking than on Ibiza or Menorca. The mountains of the northwest, the **Serra de Tramuntana,** are best for exploring. The tourist office (see above) will provide you with a free booklet called *20 Hiking Excursions on the Island of Majorca.* For hiking information, contact **Grup Excursionista de Mallorca,** the Mallorcan Hiking Association, at Calle dels Horts, 1 Baixos, in Palma (www.gemweb.org; ✆ **97-171-88-23**).

TENNIS If your hotel doesn't have a court, head for the **Club de Tenis,** Av. Son Rigo s/n (✆ **97-126-12-89**).

EXPLORING PALMA

Banys Arabs HISTORIC SITE As you wander the narrow streets of the medieval quarter (Barri Gòtic) east of the cathedral, visit these Moorish baths that date from the 10th century. They are the only intact Moorish-constructed buildings in Palma. One room contains a dome supported by 12 columns.

Carrer Serra 7. ✆ **97-172-15-49.** Admission 2€. Apr–Nov daily 9:30am–8pm; Dec–Mar daily 9:30am–7pm. Bus: 15.

Castell de Bellver ★ ☺ CASTLE Erected in 1309, this round hilltop castle was the summer palace of the kings of Mallorca—during the brief era when Mallorca had kings. The castle, which was a fortress with a double moat, is well preserved and now houses the **Museu Municipal,** which is devoted to archaeological objects and old coins. The chief attraction here is the view—in fact, the name, Bellver, means "beautiful view."

C. De Camillo Josè Cela s/n. ✆ **97-173-06-57.** Admission 1.70€ adults; 1€ children 14–18, students, and seniors; free for children 13 and under. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 8am–9pm, Sun 10am–7pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 8am–7:15pm, Sun 10am–5pm. Bus: 3, 4, or 20.

Catedral (La Seu) ★ CATHEDRAL This Catalán Gothic cathedral stands in the Old Town overlooking the ocean. Begun during the reign of Jaume II (1276–1311), it was completed in 1601. Its central vault is 43m (141 ft.) high, and its columns rise 20m (66 ft.). There is a wrought-iron *baldachin* (canopy) by Gaudí over the main altar. The treasury contains pieces said to be part of the True Cross, and relics of San Sebastián, patron saint of Palma. Museum and cathedral hours often change; call ahead to make sure they're accepting visitors before you go.

Plaça de l'Almoina s/n. ✆ **97-172-31-30.** Free admission to cathedral; museum and treasury 4€. Apr–May and Oct Mon–Fri 10am–5:15pm, Sat 10am–2:15pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Fri 10am–3:15pm, Sat 10am–2:15pm; June–Sept Mon–Fri 10am–6:15pm, Sat 10am–2:15pm. Bus: 15 or 25.

The Castell de Bellver.

La Seu's *baldachin.*

The sculpture gardens of the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca.

Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani ART MUSEUM This modern and contemporary art museum opened in the old defensive bastion in 2004. Its collection of outdoor sculpture is particularly strong.

Plaça Porta de Santa Catalina 10. www.esbaluard.org. ✆ **97-190-82-00.** Admission 6€ adults, 4.50€ seniors and students, free ages 11 and younger. Oct to mid-June Tues–Sun 10am–8pm; mid-June to Sept Tues-Sun 10am–10pm. Bus: 1.

Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca ★ ART MUSEUM The great artist and his wife, Pilar Juncosa, donated four workshops where the artist worked from 1956 until his death in 1983. At Miró's former estate, rotating exhibitions devoted to his life and work are presented along with a permanent collection of his art and sculptures. You can also see his studio as it was when he died.

Carrer Joan de Saridakis 29. http://miro.palmademallorca.es. ✆ **97-170-14-20.** Admission 6€ adults, 3€ children and seniors; free to all Sat. Mid-May to mid-Sept Tues–Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–3pm; off season Tues–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 10am–3pm. Bus: 3 or 6.

Marineland ☺ AMUSEMENT PARK Eighteen kilometers (11 miles) west of Palma off the coast road to Palma Nova, this attraction offers dolphin, sea lion, and parrot shows. The daily dolphin shows are at 11:30am and 3:30pm; the parrot shows, also daily, at 10:30am, 12:30, and 4:30pm. There's a Polynesian pearl-diving demonstration and a small zoo. You'll find a cafeteria, picnic area, and children's playground, as well as beach facilities.

Costa d'en Blanes s/n. www.marineland.es. ✆ **97-167-51-25.** Admission 23€ adults, 17€ children 3–12, free for children 2 and under. Feb 14–Oct 30 daily 9:30am–4pm. Closed Oct 31–Feb 13. Direct bus, marked MARINELAND, from Palma rail station.

Museu Fundación Juan March ★ ART MUSEUM Works in this museum represent one of the most fertile periods of 20th-century art, with canvases by Picasso, Miró, Dalí, and Juan Gris, as well as by Antoni Tàpies, Carlos Saura, Miquel Barceló, Lluis Gordillo, Susana Solano, and Jordi Teixidor. The oldest and best-known work in the museum is Picasso's *Head of a Woman,* from his cycle of paintings known as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.*

Carrer Sant Miquel 11. www.march.es. ✆ **97-171-35-15.** Free admission. Mon–Fri 10am–6:30pm; Sat 10:30am–2pm.

Palau de l'Almudaina PALACE Long ago, Muslim rulers erected this splendid fortress surrounded by Moorish-style gardens and fountains opposite the cathedral. During the reign of the kings of Mallorca, it was converted into a royal residence. Now the museum displays antiques, artwork, suits of armor, and Gobelin tapestries. The grounds have panoramic views of the harbor.

Carrer Palau Reial s/n. www.patrimonionacional.es. ✆ **97-121-41-34.** Admission 9€ adults, 4€ children. Apr–Sept Mon–Fri 10am–5:45pm, Sat 10am–1:15pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Fri 10am–1:15pm and 4–5:15pm, Sat 10am–1:15pm. Closed holidays. Bus: 15.

An Unspoiled Mediterranean Island

Declared a National Reserve in 1991, **Illa de Cabrera** ★★ lies off the south coast of Mallorca. It is the largest of the 19 islands that form the Archipelago of Cabrera. With its lush vegetation, dramatic coastline, and abundant animal life, it makes for the most intriguing day trip from Mallorca. Large colonies of birds and marine fauna await visitors. In the 13th and 14th centuries, Cabrera was used by pirates as a base from which to attack Mallorca. The ruins of a castle built in the 14th century can be seen at the entrance to the port. **Excursions à Cabrera** (www.excursionsacabrera.es; ✆ **97-164-90-34**) operates tours from Colonia de Sant Jordi, 47km (29 miles) southeast of Palma around 9:30am daily, returning at 6pm; the round-trip fare is 35€. Trip time is 30 minutes.

WHERE TO EAT IN & AROUND PALMA

Mallorca's most typical main dish is *lomo,* or pork loin. *Lomo con col* envelopes the loin in cabbage leaves and serves it with a sauce of tomatoes, grapes, pine nuts, and bay leaf. A local sausage, *sabrosada,* is made with pure pork and red peppers. *Sopas mallorquinas* typically consist of mixed greens in soup flavored with olive oil and thickened with bread. The best-known vegetable dish is *el tumbet,* a lasagna of potato and eggplant layers. Everything is covered with a tomato sauce and peppers, and then simmered for a while. Eggplant is an island mainstay, often stuffed with meat or fish. *Frito mallorquín* is a dish of fried onions and potatoes, mixed with red peppers, diced lamb liver, "lights" (lungs), and fennel.

Expensive

Caballito de Mar SEAFOOD The "Little Seahorse" exploits the local catch, serving up a Catalán *zarzuela* (fish stew), grilled monkfish with scallops and potato purée, and oysters in season. Not quite so local, the roasted turbot with potatoes and shellfish is a hearty dish. The kitchen also makes excellent ravioli filled with duck liver.

Passeig de Sagrera 5. www.caballitodemar.info. ✆ **97-172-10-74.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 20€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. June–Sept daily 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight; off season Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 8pm–midnight. Bus: 6 or 15.

Es Rebost d'Es Baluard ★ MALLORCAN This "glass box" attached to Es Baluard modern art museum serves the contemporary Mallorcan cuisine of chef Joan Torrens. For starters, try an innovative version of sticky rice with rabbit, mushrooms, and snails. For fish, consider the ragout of prawns and scallops with a citrus vinaigrette. Roast loin of lamb stuffed with eggplant is a good, if heavy, treat.

Plaza Santa Catalina 9. www.esbaluardrestaurant.com. ✆ **97-171-96-09.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–21€; fixed-price menu 55€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Tues and Thurs–Sat 1:30–3:30pm and 8–10:30pm; Sun 1:30–3:30pm. Closed last 2 weeks of Jan and last 2 weeks of Aug. Bus: 3, 7, or 15.

La Bodeguilla ★★ MALLORCAN/SPANISH This downtown tavern has a great wine list (300 choices) and excellent regional food. At a table made from a glass-topped barrel, you can dine on *carpaccio de pulpo* (octopus) or *ravioli de morcilla* (fennel-flavored blood sausage tucked into a delicate noodle pouch). The chef's specialty is a duxelle sirloin of venison with foie gras and fresh mushrooms in a puff-pastry crust. Other delights from various regions of Spain include

Castilian young lamb, deer Wellington, cod with garlic and chili peppers, and fresh anchovies from Andalucía.

Carrer San Jaume 3. www.la-bodeguilla.com. ✆ **97-171-82-74.** Reservations required. Main courses 17€–36€. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–midnight.

Simply Fosh ★ INTERNATIONAL Located on the ground floor of the Convent de la Missió (p. 710), Marc Fosh's showcase restaurant offers creative cuisine, using top seasonal produce. Market cuisine is about the moment, so order the fish of the day. Some of the finest dishes are grilled squid with black rice, a saffron aioli, and a tomato-and-lime vinaigrette; sea bass with fresh clams, a saffron lemon purée, and ratatouille sauce; and duck breast with grilled polenta, red-wine shallots, and a duck liver purée.

Carrer de la Missió 7. www.simplyfosh.com. ✆ **97-172-01-14.** Reservations required. Main courses 15€–28€; fixed-price lunch 18€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1–3:30pm and 7:30–10:30pm.

Tristán ★★★ CONTEMPORARY SPANISH Several miles southwest of Palma, Tristán overlooks the marina of Port Portals. The most decorated restaurant in the Balearics, it has earned two Michelin stars for its market-based cuisine. Some top dishes might include Iberian pork braised in red wine and served with foie gras, and a plate of fried quail with braised onions. Try John Dory with a tarragon-laced tomato sauce.

Port Portals 1, Portals Nous. www.grupotristan.com. ✆ **97-167-55-47.** Reservations required. Fixed-price menus 82€–159€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 8–11pm. Closed Jan 7–Feb 28.

Moderate

Restaurante Sa Caseta 🎁 MALLORCAN To escape the heat of Palma, head directly west of the city to the satellite village of Gènova to enjoy local cuisine served by a helpful staff. *Sopas mallorquinas* (the island's famed vegetable soup) is a good way to begin before choosing one of 10 preparations of codfish. You can order suckling pig or roast baby lamb—or try the paella made with salt cod and vegetables.

Carrer Alférez Martínez Vaquer 1, Gènova. www.sacaseta.com. ✆ **97-140-42-81** or 97-140-26-40. Reservations recommended. Main courses 12€–25€; tasting menus 25€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 1:30–4:30pm and 7:30pm–midnight; Fri–Sun 1:30pm–midnight. Closed Wed Oct–Feb. Bus: Take Gènova bus.

Inexpensive

La Bóveda SPANISH Set in the oldest part of Palma near the cathedral, this rustic-looking restaurant has a busy tapas bar and just 14 restaurant tables. The menu lists well-prepared Spanish staples, including roast or fried veal, pork, chicken, and fish, served with fresh greens, potatoes, or rice. Or make a meal of tapas like favas with strips of ham, spinach tortilla, grilled or deep-fried calamari, and shrimp with garlic.

Calle Botería 3. www.restaurantelaboveda.com. ✆ **97-171-48-63.** Reservations recommended for a table in the restaurant, not necessary for the tapas bar. Main courses 14€–22€; tapas 6€–18€. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 1:30–4pm and 8:30pm–midnight. Closed Feb. Bus: 7 or 13.

Restaurante Mesón Can Pedro MALLORCAN This unpretentious restaurant in a hilltop suburb (Gènova) overlooking Palma is acclaimed for grilled lamb chops. Another regional dish worth sampling is savory snails prepared with fennel and garlic and served with dollops of aioli.

Carrer Rector Vives 4 and 14, Gènova. www.mesoncanpedro.com. ✆ **97-140-24-79.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–28€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:30–4:30pm and 7pm–midnight. Bus: 4.

SHOPPING

Stores in Palma offer handicrafts, elegant leather goods, Mallorcan pearls, and fine needlework. The best shopping is on these streets: San Miguel, Carrer Sindicato, Jaume II, Jaume III, Carrer Platería, Vía Roman, and Passeig des Borne, plus the streets radiating from the Borne all the way to Plaça Cort. **Loewe,** Av. Jaume III no. 1 (www.loewe.com; ✆ **97-171-52-75**), offers fine leather, elegant accessories for men and women, luggage, and chic apparel for women. For high-quality artificial pearls, head for **Mediterráneo,** Av. Jaume III no. 11, Centro (✆ **97-171-21-59**). Since 1719, **Gordiola,** Carrer de la Victoria 2 (✆ **97-171-15-41**), has been making the best glass products on the island.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Palma is packed with bars and dance clubs. The island's northern tier has some clubs, but for a rocking laser- and strobe-lit club, boogie in Palma.

Right on the beach by lots of hotels, **Tito's,** Passeig Marítim (www.titosmallorca.com; ✆ **97-173-00-17**), charges a cover of 15€ to 18€, including the first drink. The international crowd frequents this most popular disco on Mallorca. Between June and September, it's open every night from 11pm to at least 6am. The rest of the year, it's open Thursday to Sunday 11pm to 6am.

On the side of a cliff fronting the bay, **Abraxas,** Av. De Gabriel Roca 42 (www.abraxasmallorca.com; ✆ **97-145-59-08**), is a cavelike club with a crowded dance floor and an open-air terrace. Disco balls, go-go dancers, and strobes will transport you back to the '60s. Cover ranges from 12€ to 21€ and includes (depending on the night) one or two drinks. It's open daily 10pm to 6am.

Costa Galana, Av. Argentina 45 (✆ **97-145-46-58**), is an elegant bar with white leather chairs and a sonic menu of electric jazz and deep house music. Upstairs is a bustling cafe; the lounge downstairs pulsates at night. It's open Monday to Thursday and Sunday 8am to 2am, Friday and Saturday 8am to 4am. Beer costs from 2.50€, mixed drinks from 5€.

ABACO, Carrer Sant Joan 1 (www.bar-abaco.com; ✆ **97-171-49-39**), looks like a cross between a harem and a czarist Russian church. Customers congregate in a courtyard with exotic caged birds, fountains, more sculpture than the eye can absorb, extravagant bouquets, and hundreds of flickering candles. The bar is open Sunday to Thursday 8pm to 1am, Friday and Saturday 8pm to 3am, from February to December only. Wandering around is free; drinks cost 15€ to 16€.

Gran Casino Mallorca lies on the harborfront promenade at Av. Gabriel Roca 4 (www.casinodemallorca.com; (✆ **97-113-00-00**). You'll need a passport (plus a shirt and tie for men) to enter and play table games or slots. The casino is open daily 4pm to 5am. Entry is 4€.

The best beer hall is **Lorien,** Carrer de les Caputxines 5 (✆ **97-172-32-02**), with 100 types of beer from two dozen countries, including Belgium, Germany, Holland, and England.

WHERE TO STAY

Some of our hotel recommendations are in El Terreno, the heart of local nightlife. Don't book into one of these hotels unless you like plenty of action, continuing until late at night. Palma's suburbs, notably Cala Mayor, about 4km (2½ miles) from the center, and San Agustín, about 5km (3 miles) from town, continue to sprawl. El Arenal, part of Playas de Palma, has many hotels but the beaches have a Coney Island atmosphere.

Very Expensive

Castillo Hotel Son Vida ★★★ Set in a 13th-century castle in the Son Vida Hills, on a secluded hilltop overlooking Palma, this hotel has the island's best views. Several additional if less distinctive rooms are in a modern wing, a pleasing reproduction of a Spanish hacienda. The hotel's public rooms are swathed in sumptuous fabrics, Oriental rugs, and chandeliers. Many guest rooms have private balconies or terraces.

Carrer Raixa 2, 07013 Palma de Mallorca. www.starwoodhotels.com. ✆ **97-149-34-93.** Fax 97-149-34-94. 167 units. 355€–880€ double; from 910€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 7. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; children's center; concierge; exercise room; 2 nearby golf courses; 3 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, kitchenette, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Palacio Ca Sa Galesa ★★ 🎁 Although not in the same league as the Arabella and Son Vida, this delightful hotel is less expensive. This 15th-century town house languished as a decaying apartment building until an entrepreneurial couple from Cardiff, Wales, restored it in 1993, salvaging the original marble floors and stained-glass windows, sheathing the walls of the public areas with silk, and adding modern amenities. Today the place is loaded with English and Spanish antiques and paintings. Most rooms overlook an enclosed courtyard draped with potted plants and climbing vines. Guest rooms are opulent, with antiques and Persian rugs.

Carrer de Miramar 8, 07001 Palma de Mallorca. www.palaciocasagalesa.com. ✆ **97-171-54-00.** Fax 97-172-15-79. 12 units. 286€–354€ double; 379€–509€ suite. AE, MC, V. Parking 17€. Bus: 15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; health club; indoor heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station.

Sheraton Mallorca Arabella Golf Hotel ★★ ☺ Castillo Hotel Son Vida (see above) is more elegant, but Arabella is more scenically located. The ecology of the area has been fiercely protected. Don't come here expecting raucous times on the beach—the resort is rather staid. There's no health club and no shuttle to the beach; many visitors drive to the several nearby beaches. Arabella does boast one of the only hotel bullrings in Spain. The low-rise complex is intensely landscaped and offers views over the lush green grounds (not of the sea) from many of its good-size rooms. Guest rooms have white walls, dark-stained furnishings, carpeting, and, in the more expensive units, balconies or verandas. The hotel's golfing facilities are among the best in Spain, and room rates include greens fees. Guests can patronize the Arabella courses of Son Vida, Son Muntaner, Son Quint—all 18-hole courses—or the 9-hole Son Quint Executive Course. Guests have free shuttle transfer to all four courses.

Carrer de la Vinagrella s/n, 07013 Palma de Mallorca. www.sheratonmallorcagolfhotel.com. ✆ **800/325-3535** in the U.S., or 97-178-71-00. Fax 97-178-72-00. 93 units. 415€–480€ double; 490€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast and greens fees. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: 7. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; bikes; children's center; concierge; exercise room; 18-hole golf course; 2 pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; 3 outdoor tennis courts (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar.

Expensive

Convent de la Missió ★ 🎁 In Palma's Old Town, next to a church of the same name, this 17th-century convent stands amid narrow streets and plant-filled courtyards. Now a graceful hotel, it includes many amenities, including a solarium and a whirlpool. The guest rooms range from small to spacious. Suites are equipped with Jacuzzis. The guest rooms are comfortably furnished, very inviting, and cozy in their minimalist style, with white and sand the predominant colors.

Carrer de la Missió s/n, 07003 Palma de Mallorca. www.conventdelamissio.com. ☎ **97-122-73-47.** Fax 97-122-73-48. 14 units. 185€–240€ double; 260€ junior suite; 310€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 15€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Puro ★ Self-consciously hip, Puro evokes Miami's South Beach with a touch of Barcelona. The all-white lobby flows up a flight of steps to an all-white bar leading to an all-white restaurant, where you dine inside "tents" decked with tassels. Midsize to spacious rooms exhibit touches of whimsy, with everything from mirror-studded cushions from Rajasthan to feathered hats from Cameroon. The roof deck with plunge pool, sun beds, and tents, is the perfect place to practice studied indolence.

Montenegro 12, 07012 Palma de Mallorca. www.purohotel.com. ☎ **97-142-54-50.** Fax 97-142-54-51. 23 units. 135€–285€ double; 170€–325€ junior suite; 230€–515€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking 18€. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar, movie library, Wi-Fi (free).

Tres Mallorca ★★ 🎁 This little gem of a boutique hotel in the heart of Palma's Old Town combines a 1576 palace with a modern structure, melding rustic island style and contemporary design. A bridge linking two roof terraces is the most unusual feature of the hotel. In this space guests enjoy an infinity splash pool, and sweeping vistas of city and port. Midsize bedrooms are minimalist in decor but comfortably and attractively furnished, with wood floors and plush sofas in flamboyant colors.

Calle Apuntadores 3, 07012 Palma de Mallorca. www.hoteltres.com. ☎ **97-171-73-33.** Fax 97-171-73-72. 41 units. 232€–243€ double; 286€–304€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (in some; free).

Moderate

Dalt Murada ★ This boutique hotel occupies a 16th-century manor house. Tapestries, antiques, paintings, and chandeliers hint at the past, but large Jacuzzi tubs in the modern tiled bathrooms trumpet the 21st century. Breakfast can be taken in the interior courtyard, overgrown with bougainvillea and citrus trees. Rooms are equally divided between suites and doubles, but each is spacious.

Almudaina 6A, 07001 Palma de Mallorca. www.daltmurada.com. ☎ **97-142-53-00.** Fax 97-171-97-08. 16 units. 88€–210€ double; 277€ suite. AE, MC, V. Bus: 3 or 7. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, fridge, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Almudaina Located on the main commercial street in Palma, this simple hotel offers comfortable, clean, basic rooms. Although small, the units are well maintained and have neatly kept bathrooms. Because of the street location, many of the rooms are quite noisy; the quietest are in the rear. Some have terraces and glass doors letting in ample sunlight.

Av. Jaume III, no. 9, 07012 Palma de Mallorca. www.hotelalmudaina.com. ✆ **97-172-73-40.** Fax 97-172-25-99. 77 units. 110€–160€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Nearby parking 17€. Bus: 1, 13, or 15. **Amenities:** Bar; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Saratoga The entrance to this hotel is under an arcade beside the medieval moat. Constructed in 1962, the hotel features bright, well-furnished guest rooms, many with balconies or terraces with views of the bay and city. One of the hotel's most attractive features is a bar-cafe on the seventh floor, with views over the bay.

Passeig Mallorca 6, 07012 Palma de Mallorca. www.hotelsaratoga.es. ✆ **97-172-72-40.** Fax 97-172-73-12. 187 units. 87€–180€ double; 210€–230€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 16€. Bus: 3, 7, or 15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; 2 outdoor pools; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Inexpensive

Hotel Born ★ 🏷 A 16th-century palace in the exact city center was vastly altered and extended in the 18th century with a Mallorcan courtyard. Today it's a cozy inn with modern amenities, yet retains many architectural features such as Romanesque arches. Guest rooms are spacious. Off Plaça Rei Juan Carlos, the hotel opens onto a tranquil side street.

Carrer Sant Jaume 3, 07012 Palma de Mallorca. www.hotelborn.com. ✆ **97-171-29-42.** Fax 97-171-86-18. 30 units. 60€–100€ double; 120€ suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Bus: 1 or 3. **Amenities:** Bar; bikes. *In room:* A/C, TV.

WHERE TO STAY AT ILLETAS

This suburb of Palma lies immediately west of the center.

Hotel Bon Sol ★ ☺ Across from a beach about 6.5km (4 miles) west of Palma, this 1953 hotel charges less than similar establishments and the beach makes it popular with families. The core is a four-story, white-sided masonry tower; some of the suites are clustered into simple, outlying villas. The hotel overlooks a garden, adjacent to the sea. Midsize rooms are efficient but comfortable and well suited to beachfront vacations.

Paseo de Illetas 30, 07181 Illetas, Mallorca. www.hotelbonsol.es. ✆ **97-140-21-11.** Fax 97-140-25-59. 147 units. 84€–155€ per person double; 112€–158€ per person suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: Take bus marked ILLETAS. Closed Nov 6–Dec 20. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; 2 pools; room service; spa; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

WHERE TO STAY AT SANTA MARÍA DEL CAMI

Reads Hotel & Spa ★★ Peacefully located in beautiful countryside, this hotel is only 18km (11 miles) from Palma. The 16th-century Mallorcan villa has been renovated and furnished with antiques and good reproductions. An unspoiled view of the Sierra de Tramuntana forms the backdrop to the hotel, which is surrounded by gardens. Beamed ceilings and wooden shutters add a traditional touch to the rooms, which are painted in subtle Mediterranean colors. Deluxe doubles and suites have French doors opening onto terraces with stunning views. Children must be 12 or older.

Ca'n Moragues s/n, 07320 Santa María, Mallorca. www.readshotel.com. ✆ **97-114-02-61.** Fax 97-114-07-62. 23 units. 395€ double; 470€ junior suite; 590€–790€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; bikes; exercise room; 2 pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; tennis court (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer.

WHERE TO STAY AT PUIGPUNENT

Gran Hotel Son Net ★★★ This 17th-century manor house next to a nature reserve is nestled in a lush mountain valley 15km (9⅓ miles) from Palma. In addition to the beauty of its setting, the hotel boasts works by artists such as Hockney and Stella, and there's even a small Chagall on one wall. Classical Mallorcan aristocratic decor has been followed faithfully, with white walls, stone floors, and dark wood beams and shutters. Rooms are spacious, and idyllic top corner units have a southern exposure.

Castillo Son Net s/n, 07194 Puigpunent, Mallorca. www.sonnet.es. ✆ **97-114-70-00.** Fax 97-114-70-01. 24 units. 225€–590€ double; 690€–1,575€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Bus: Take Puigpunent bus. Closed Nov–Jan. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; outdoor pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

WHERE TO STAY AT LA BONANOVA

Valparaíso Palace ★★ This magnificently situated hotel is directly west of Palma and south of the sprawling grounds of Castell de Bellver, the round hilltop castle crowning Palma. Only minutes from the center of town and 2km (1¼ miles) from a good beach, this seven-story luxury property has been in business since 1976. The architecture is extremely modern, and the entrance is set in the midst of landscaped gardens and an artificial lake. Guest rooms are spacious and handsomely furnished.

Calle Francisco Vidal Sureda 23, 07016 Palma de Mallorca. www.grupotelvalparaiso.com. ✆ **97-140-03-00.** Fax 97-140-59-04. 174 units. 220€–324€ double; 360€–524€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; health club; 3 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (6€ per hr.).

The West Coast of Mallorca

Mountainous Mallorca's dramatic scenery is best appreciated by driving. The following daylong circuit of 142km (88 miles) begins and ends in Palma.

Leave Palma heading west on C-719. Just a short distance from the sea rises the Sierra de Tramuntana. The road passes Palma Nova before coming to **Santa Ponça,** a town with a fishing harbor divided by a promontory. A fortified Gothic tower and a watchtower are evidence of the days when this small harbor suffered repeated raids and attacks. Jaume I's troops landed in a cove here on September 12, 1229, to begin the Reconquest of the island from the Muslims.

From Santa Ponça, continue along the highway, passing Paguera, Cala Fornells, and Camp de Mar, all beautiful spots with sandy coves. Between Camp de Mar and Port D'Andratx are corniche roads, a twisting journey to **Port D'Andratx.** Summer vacationers mingle with fishermen in this natural port set against a backdrop of pines. The place was once a haven for smugglers.

Continue northeast along C-719 to reach **Andratx,** 5km (3 miles) away. Because of frequent raids by Turkish pirates, this town moved inland. Located 31km (19 miles) west of Palma, Andratx is one of the loveliest towns on the island, surrounded by fortifications and boasting a Gothic parish church and the mansion of Son Mas.

Take the Train

If you're not driving, you can still reach Sóller aboard a turn-of-the-20th-century narrow-gauge railroad train from Palma. You can catch the train at the Palma Terminal on Calle Eusebio Estada, near Plaça d'Espanya. It runs daily from 8am to 7pm; the fare is 10€ one-way. Call ✆ **97-175-20-51** for information.

From Andratx, take C-710 N, a winding road parallel to the island's jagged northwestern coast. Most of the road is perched along the cliff edge and shaded by pine trees. It's hard to drive and pay attention to the scenery, so stop at the **Mirador Ricardo Roca** for a panoramic view of a series of coves that can be reached only from the sea.

The road continues to **Estallenchs,** a town of steep slopes surrounded by pine groves, olive and almond trees, and fruit orchards (especially apricot). Estallenchs sits at the foot of the Galatzo mountain peak. Stop to explore some of its steep, winding streets on foot. From the town, you can walk to Cala de Estallenchs cove, where a spring cascades down the high cliffs.

The road winds on to **Bañalbufar,** 8km (5 miles) from Estallenchs and about 26km (16 miles) west from Palma. Set 100m (328 ft.) above sea level, it seems to perch directly over the sea. **Mirador de Ses Animes ★**, a belvedere constructed in the 17th century, offers a panoramic view of the coastline.

Many small excursions are possible from here. You might want to venture over to **Port d'es Canonge,** reached by a road branching out from the C-710 to the north of Bañalbufar. It has a beach, a simple restaurant, and some old fishermen's houses. The same road takes you inland to **San Granja,** a mansion originally constructed by the Cistercians as a monastery in the 13th century.

Back on C-710, continue to **Valldemossa,** the town where composer Frédéric Chopin and French novelist George Sand spent a now-famous winter. After a visit to the **Cartuja** (Carthusian monastery) where they lived, wander through the steep streets of the Old Town. The cloister of **Ses Murteres** provides a romantic garden. Note the pharmacy where Chopin, who was often ill during that winter, spent much time. The **Carthusian Church** is from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Goya's father-in-law, Bayeu, painted the dome's frescoes.

Beyond Valldemossa, the road runs along cliffs some 395m (1,300 ft.) high until it reaches **Son Marroig,** the former residence of Archduke Luis Salvador, and now a museum. Salvador erected a small neoclassical temple on a slope overlooking the sea to give visitors a panoramic vista. From a balcony, you can enjoy a view of the famous pierced rock, the **Foradada,** rising out of the water.

You have now reached **Deià,** where small tile altars in the streets reproduce Stations of the Cross. This was the home of English writer Robert Graves for many years. He is buried at the **Campo Santo** cemetery.

Continue north along the highway. You come first to **Lluch Alcari,** where Picasso retreated for a short period in the 1950s. The settlement was once the victim of pirate raids, and you can see the ruins of several defense towers.

C-710 continues to **Sóller,** just 10km (6¼ miles) from Deià. The urban center has five 16th-century facades, an 18th-century convent, and a parish church of the 16th and 17th centuries. It lies in a broad basin where citrus and olive trees are abundant. Many painters, including Rusiñol, settled here and found inspiration.

Travel 5km (3 miles) north on C-711 to reach the coast and **Port de Sóller,** perched on a sheltered round bay. A submarine base is here today, but it is also a harbor for pleasure craft. It has a lovely beach. The **Sanctuary of Santa Catalina** has one of the best views of the inlet.

After leaving the Sóller area, you face a choice: If you've run out of time, you can cut the tour in half here and head back along C-711 to Palma with two stops along the way. Your other option is to continue north, following the C-710 and local roads, to **Cap de Formentor,** where even more spectacular scenery awaits you. Among the highlights of this coastal detour: **Fornalutx,** a lofty mountain village with steep cobbled streets, Moorish-tiled roofs, and groves of almond trees; the splendid, hair-raising road to the harbor village of **Sa Calobra,** plunging to the sea in one area and then climbing arduously past olive groves, oaks, and jagged boulders in another area; and the 13th-century **Monasterio de Lluc,** some 45km (28 miles) north of Palma, which is home to the Black Virgin of Lluc, the island's patron saint. The well-known boys' and girls' choir sings there daily at noon and again at twilight.

Those not taking the coastal detour can head south along C-711 with a stop at **Jardines de Alfàbia,** Carretera Palma–Sóller Km 17 (www.jardinesdealfabia.com; ✆ **97-161-31-23**), a former Muslim residence. This foothills estate includes a palace and romantic gardens. You can wander among pergolas, a pavilion, and ponds, or go indoors to see a collection of Mallorcan furniture and an Arabic coffered ceiling. The gardens are open April to October Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 6:30pm; and November to March Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm, and Saturday 9:30am to 1pm. Admission is 5€.

From Alfàbia, the highway becomes straight and Palma is just 18km (11 miles) away. But before reaching the capital, consider a final stop at **Raixa,** built on the site of an old Muslim hamlet. It stands 1.5km (1 mile) outside the village of Buñola ("Small Vineyard"). The present building was once the estate of Cardinal Despuif and his family, who constructed it in the Italian style near the end of the 1700s. Ruins from Roman excavations are found on the grounds. Rusiñol came here, painting the place several times. Raixa keeps the same hours as Jardines de Alfàbia (see above). After Raixa, the route leads directly to the northern outskirts of Palma.

Valldemossa & Deià ★★

Valldemossa is the site of the **Cartoixa Reial** ★, Plaça de las Cartujas s/n (✆ **97-161-21-06**), where George Sand and the tubercular Frédéric Chopin wintered in 1838 and 1839, shocking the locals. Fearing they'd catch Chopin's tuberculosis, the peasants burned all but a small painting and a French piano after the couple left. The cells may be visited November to February Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 4:30pm and

A courtyard of the Cartoixa Reial.

A winding road in Deià.

Sunday 10am to 1:30pm, and March to October Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 6pm. Admission is 7.50€ adults, free for children 9 and under.

It's also possible to visit **Palau del Rei Sancho,** next door to the monastery, on the same ticket. This is a Moorish retreat built by one of the island kings. You'll be given a guided tour of the palace by a woman in Mallorcan dress.

From Valldemossa, continue through the mountains, following the signposts for 11km (6¾ miles) to Deià. Before the village, consider a stopover at **Son Marroig** (www.sonmarroig.com; ✆ **97-163-91-58**), at Km 26 on the highway. Now a museum, this was once the estate of Archduke Luis Salvador. Born in 1847, the archduke fled court life and found refuge here with his young bride in 1870. A tower on the estate is from the 1500s. Many of the archduke's personal furnishings and mementos, such as photographs and his ceramic collection, are still here. The estate is surrounded by lovely gardens, and the property has many panoramic views. It is open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 6:30pm (to 5:30pm in winter). Admission is 3€.

Set against a backdrop of olive green mountains, **Deià** (**Deyá** in Catalán) is peaceful and serene, with stone houses and creeping bougainvillea. It has long had a special meaning for artists. Robert Graves, the English poet and novelist (*I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*), lived in Deià, and died here in 1985. He is buried in the local cemetery. It is now possible to visit Graves's home, **Ca N'Alluny ★**, Carretera de Soller Km 1 (✆ **97-163-61-85**), a 5-minute walk from the center of the town. Graves and his then companion, Laura Riding, built the house in 1932. The poet wrote: "I wanted to go where town was still town; and country, country." The house has been restored to circa 1946, when Graves returned to the island. Visitors can explore the studies of both Laura and Robert Graves, and visit kitchen and dining room.

Valldemossa lacks basic services, including a tourist office. It is connected to a bus service from Palma, however. **Bus Nort Balear** (✆ **97-149-06-80**) goes to Valldemossa 13 times daily for a one-way fare of 6€. Buses leave Palma at Plaza España (Calle Eusebio Estrada). To reach Deià by public transportation from Palma, 27km (17 miles) away, stay on the bus that stops in Valldemossa. If you're driving from Palma, take the Carretera Valldemossa–Deià to Valldemossa and continue to Deià. Those with cars might want to consider one of the idyllic lodging options offered in this little Mallorcan village.

WHERE TO EAT

El Olivo ★★ INTERNATIONAL/MEDITERRANEAN One of the island's most elegant and upscale restaurants, Olivo occupies a thick-walled outbuilding that once housed an olive press. The modern cuisine includes such tempting starters as tuna in sesame oil served with a gazpacho sorbet, and a fish-and-seafood broth swimming with ravioli under a lemon foam. Main-dish delights include fish seasoned with herbs and served with candied garlic, and breast of duckling poached in cava and served with fresh figs and a fig mustard.

In La Residencia Hotel, Son Canals, 07179 Deià, Mallorca. www.hotel-laresidencia.com. ✆ **97-163-93-92.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 28€–46€; tasting menu 99€. AE, DC, MC, V. Winter Wed–Sun 7:30–10:30pm; summer daily 7:30–11pm. Closed last week in Jan and 2 weeks in Feb.

Es Racò d'es Teix ★★ MEDITERRANEAN Chef Josef Sauerschell makes sublime dishes that reflect an inventive turn of mind. Begin with his carpaccio of tuna with sesame, honey, coriander, and mango, or his parfait of foie gras with apricots, brioche, and mange-tout. Sauerschell's main dishes are equally surprising, yet redolent of the Mallorcan coast. Try his fish soup or John Dory with a ragout of squid and sautéed vegetables. The signature special is Mallorcan suckling pig with foie gras served with cabbage and truffle sauce.

Calle de sa Vinya Veia 6, 07179 Deià, Mallorca. www.esracodesteix.es. ✆ **97-163-95-01.** Reservations required. Main courses 37€–40€; tasting menu without wine 98€, with wine 165€. MC, V. Wed–Sun 1–3pm and 8–11pm. Closed mid-Nov to late Jan.

Restaurante Ca'n Quet ★ INTERNATIONAL This restaurant is at the Hotel Es Molí (see below), which occupies a series of terraces above a winding road leading out of Valldemossa. The elegant indoor dining room has a blazing fire in winter, but most seasons you'll want to try the alfresco dining on the upper terrace under an arbor. The food is well prepared, and the portions are generous. Meals can include a salad of marinated fish, terrine of fresh vegetables, fish crepes, shellfish stew, duck with sherry sauce, and an ever-changing selection of fish.

Carretera Valldemossa–Sóller s/n, 07170 Valldemossa, Mallorca. www.esmoli.com. ✆ **97-163-91-96.** Reservations required. Main courses 20€–38€. AE, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1–4pm and 7:30–11pm. Closed Nov–Apr.

WHERE TO STAY

Deià offers some of the most tranquil and stunning retreats on Mallorca (like Es Molí), but has a number of more affordable little boardinghouses as well.

Cases de Ca's Garriguer ★ 🎁 Set amid olive groves, this restored manor looks as it did in the early 1800s. The old *finca* (farmhouse) on the outskirts of Valldemossa has been turned into a miniresort with swimming pool and solarium. Guest rooms are individually decorated and spacious, and some have small sitting areas. Modern art graces the otherwise old-fashioned setting of exposed wooden beams and heavy oak furnishings. Seven rooms have private terraces.

Carretera Valldemossa a Andratx Km 2.5, 07170 Valldemossa, Mallorca. www.vistamarhotel.es. ✆ **97-161-23-00.** Fax 97-161-25-83. 10 units. 115€–165€ double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, V. Free parking. Closed Nov to late Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hoposa Costa d'Or ☺ This former villa, 1.5km (1 mile) north of Deià on the road to Sóller, offers a great view of vine-covered hills and rugged coast. Surrounded by private gardens filled with fig trees, date palms, and oranges, the hotel is equipped with modern amenities such as air-conditioning. It lacks the charm of Es Molí (see below), but is still inviting. The most desirable guest rooms have panoramic views.

Lluch Alcari s/n, 07179 Deià, Mallorca. www.hoposa.es. ✆ **97-163-90-25.** Fax 97-163-93-47. 41 units. 146€–284€ double; 230€–301€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. Closed Oct 26–Mar 24. Children must be at least 14. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit); Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

Hotel Es Molí ★★ This hotel originated in the 1880s as a severely dignified manor house in the rocky highlands above Deià, home of the landowners who controlled access to the town's freshwater springs. In 1966 the manor house was augmented by two annexes, transforming it into this luxurious hotel. Guest rooms are beautifully furnished and impeccably maintained, and some have access to a private veranda overlooking the gardens or the faraway village. A few hardy souls hike for 30 minutes to the public beach at Deià Bay; others wait for the shuttle bus to take them to the hotel's private beach, 6km (3¾ miles) away.

Carretera Valldemossa s/n, 07179 Deià, Mallorca. www.esmoli.com. ✆ **97-163-90-00.** Fax 97-163-93-33. 87 units. 225€–274€ double; 360€–395€ junior suite; 425€–475€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; airport transfers (58€); babysitting; exercise room; outdoor freshwater heated pool; room service; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, minibar; Wi-Fi (30€ per 24 hr.).

Valldemossa Hotel ★ 🎁 The owners consider themselves hosts welcoming you into their private home, which was once part of the local Carthusian monastery. The 19th-century stone-built house on a hill has been sensitively restored and turned into this idyllic retreat set in acres of olive and orange trees, and opening onto Palma Bay. Bedrooms have been modernized with just enough antique touches to give them charm. Guests meet fellow guests in the courtyard shaded by swaying palms, and later they dine in a well-run restaurant, serving excellent Mediterranean dishes.

Carretera Valldemossa s/n, 17170 Valldemossa, Mallorca. www.valldemossahotel.com. ✆ **97-161-26-26.** Fax 97-161-26-25. 12 units. 335€–399€ double; 414€–525€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Lloseta

Away from the madding crowds (and the beaches), the hamlet of Lloseta nestles in the northcentral Raiguer region, 31km (19 miles) northeast of Palma, at the foot of the Serra de Tramuntana mountain range. One of the most beautiful regions on Mallorca, it's known for handicrafts, pottery, wine, and glassmaking.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Cas Comte Petit Hotel & Spa ★ 🎁 This 18th-century *casa sensorial* (nobleman's house) has been beautifully restored, so staying here is like a journey back into the past (but with better plumbing). Each of the guest rooms—half are doubles, half suites—is individually decorated and cozily furnished with taste and your comfort in mind. Decorated in traditional Mallorcan style, the dining room is warm and welcoming; it's complemented by an outdoor terrace and an inner courtyard.

Comte d'Aiamans 11, 07360 Lloseta, Mallorca. www.petithotelcascomte.com. ✆ **97-187-30-77.** Fax 97-151-91-92. 8 units. 141€ double; 173€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Port de Pollença/Formentor

Beside a sheltered bay and between Cap de Formentor to the north and Cap del Pinar to the south lies Port de Pollença, 65km (40 miles) north of Palma. The town is flanked by two hills: **Calvary** to the west and **Puig** to the east. Calvary Chapel offers the best views of the resort and the bay, which provides excellent water-skiing and sailing. Low-rise hotels, private homes, restaurants, and snack bars line the very attractive beach, which is somewhat narrow at its northwestern end but has some of the island's finest, whitest sand and warmest, clearest water. A pleasant pedestrian promenade lines several miles of the bay. Tons of fine white sand were imported to the beach at the southeastern end of Pollença Bay to create a broad ribbon of sunbathing space. Windsurfing, water-skiing, and scuba diving are among the watersports offered in the area.

Cap de Formentor ★, "the Devil's Tail," can be reached from Port de Pollença via a spectacular road, twisting along to the lighthouse at the cape's end. Formentor is Mallorca's fjord country—a dramatic landscape of mountains, pine trees, rocks, and sea, plus some of the best beaches in Mallorca. In Cap de Formentor, you'll see *miradores,* or panoramic overlooks.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Five **buses** a day leave the Plaça Espanya in Palma, pass through Inca, and continue on to Port de Pollença; a one-way fare costs 7.50€. If you're driving, you can continue on from Deià (p. 714) along C-710 all the way to Pollença.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** on Passeig de Saralegui s/n (✆ **97-186-54-67**), is open Monday to Saturday 8am to 3pm and 5 to 7pm.

The view from Cap de Formentor.

EXPLORING PORT DE POLLENÇA/FORMENTOR

The plunging cliffs and rocky coves of Mallorca's northwest coast are a stunning prelude to Port de Pollença. The **Mirador de Colomer** provides an expansive view of the California-like coast from Punta de la Nau to Punta de la Troneta and includes El Colomer (Pigeon's Rock). But it is the 20km (12-mile) stretch of winding, at times vertiginous road leading from Port de Pollença to the tip of the **Formentor Peninsula** that delivers the island's most intoxicating views. Cliffs more than 200m (656 ft.) high and rock-rimmed coves embrace turquoise waters. About halfway along this road is **Cala de Pi de la Posada,** with a lovely bathing beach. Continuing on to the end, you'll come to the lighthouse at **Cap de Formentor.**

Wednesday is **market day** in Port de Pollença, so head for the town square between 8am and 1pm and browse through fresh produce, leather goods, embroidered tablecloths, ceramics, and more. Bargaining is part of the fun. Sunday is market day in the town of Pollença.

Alcúdia Bay is a long stretch of narrow, sandy beach with beautiful water backed by countless hotels, whose crowds rather overwhelm the area in peak season. The nightlife is more abundant and varied here than in Port de Pollença.

Between Port de Alcúdia and Ca'n Picafort is the **Parc Natural de S'Albufera,** Carretera Alcúdia–Artá Km 27, 07458 C'an Picafort (✆ **97-189-22-50**). A wetlands area of lagoons, dunes, and canals covering some 800 hectares (1,977 acres), it attracts nature enthusiasts. More than 200 species of birds have been sighted here, with the largest numbers during spring and fall

The marshes of the Parc Natural de S'Albufera.

migrations. The park is open daily (except Christmas) October to March from 9am to 5pm and April to September from 9am to 7pm. Visits are free, but you must get a permit at the reception center, where all motorized vehicles must be left. Binoculars are available for rent.

In the town of Pollença, about 6km (3¾ miles) from Port de Pollença, an 18th-century stairway leads up to an *ermita* (hermitage). Consisting of 365 stairs, it is known as the **Monte Calvario (Calvary),** but you can also reach the top by car via Carrer de las Cruces, which is lined with 3m-high (9¾-ft.) concrete crosses. **Cala San Vicente,** between Pollença and Port de Pollença, is a pleasant, sandy cove with notable surf and several small hotels and restaurants.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Barceló Formentor ★★ This cliffside hotel is one of the most famous in the Balearic Islands, having hosted many a mid-20th-century celebrity after opening in 1929. The building is long and spread out, but it blends well with its garden landscaping. It lies next to one of the island's best beaches. Guest rooms are beautifully styled, comfortably furnished, and well maintained, coming in a variety of sizes and shapes.

Playa Formentor s/n, 07470 Port de Pollença, Mallorca. www.barceloformentor.com. ✆ **97-189-91-00.** Fax 97-186-51-55. 125 units. 180€–492€ double; 510€–929€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; 3 bars; bikes; children's center; exercise room; 2 outdoor pools; room service; sauna; 4 tennis courts (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, MP3 docking station, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Miramar 🏷 Dating from 1912, this centrally located hotel is one of Port de Pollença's grand old-fashioned hostelries, in a desirable position across the coastal road from the beach. Its ornate front columns support a formal balustrade, tiled eaves, and several jardinières. The lobby is furnished with antiques. Some rooms have private verandas overlooking the flower-filled courtyard in back. All the small to midsize guest rooms are comfortably furnished and well maintained.

Passeig Anglada Camarasa 39, 07470 Port de Pollença, Mallorca. www.hotel-miramar.net. ✆ **97-186-64-00.** Fax 97-186-40-75. 84 units. 115€–168€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bikes; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Son Brull ★★★ 🎁 Barcelona architect Nacho Forteza took a decaying 18th-century monastery and transformed it into a charming 21st-century inn by combining urban chic design with a Mediterranean lifestyle. The inn is a 10-minute drive from some idyllic sandy swimming coves. Public rooms combine modern decorations with century-old walls, with everything focused on the old mansion's beautiful inner courtyard. Spacious guest rooms are all unique, with contemporary technology and modern furniture.

Carretera Palma-Pollença s/n, 07460 Port de Pollença, Mallorca. www.sonbrull.com. ✆ **97-153-53-53.** Fax 97-153-10-68. 23 units. 241€–759€ double; 389€–857€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Dec–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; 2 freshwater heated pools (1 indoor); room service; spa; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Stay Restaurant MALLORCAN This restaurant serves largely traditional dishes, including a chicken casserole with fresh vegetables, or lightly smoked fresh fish with sweet mustard sauce. The mixed fish and prawns in wine sauce with rice is very popular.

Muelle Nuevo, Estació Marítim s/n. www.stayrestaurant.com. ✆ **97-186-40-13.** Reservations recommended July–Aug. Main courses 14€–42€; *menú del día* 35€. AE, MC, V. Daily noon–4pm and 7:30–10:30pm.

The East Coast/Cava Route

Less dramatic than the west coast, Mallorca's east coast is studded with caves and is often call the "Cava Route." Leave Palma on the freeway, but turn onto Carretera C-715 in the direction of Manacor. About 56km (35 miles) east of Palma, you come to your first stop, Petra.

PETRA

Petra was founded by Jaume II on the ruins of a Roman settlement. Father Junípero Serra (1713–84) was born here, and a statue commemorates the Franciscan who founded California's San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco missions. **Museo Beato Junípero Serra,** Carrer Barracar (✆ **97-156-11-49**), gives you an idea of 18th-century island life. The property was restored by the Rotary Club of San Francisco, which presented it as a gift to the citizens of Petra. The museum, 457m (1,500 ft.) from the center of the village, is open daily but visits are only by appointment. Call at least 1 day in advance. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged.

CUEVAS DEL DRACH ★★★

After Petra, follow C715 southeast into Manacor, and take the road east toward the town of **Porto Cristo,** 61km (38 miles) east of Palma. Go .8km (½ mile) south of town to **Cuevas del Drach** (**Caves of the Dragon;** www.cuevasdeldrach.com; ✆ **97-182-07-53**). The caves contain a forest of stalactites and stalagmites, as well as five lakes, where you can listen to a concert and later go boating. Martel Lake, 176m (577 ft.) long, is the largest underground lake in the world. From April to October, tours depart daily every hour from 10am to 5pm; from November to March, they depart daily at 10:45am, noon, 2, and 3:30pm. Admission is 12€. If you don't have a car, four daily buses leave from Palma. (Ask at the tourist bureau for departure times.) Buses pass through Manacor on the way to Porto Cristo.

CUEVAS DE ARTÀ ★★★

Near Platja de Canyamel (Playa de Cañamel on some maps), **Cuevas de Artá** (www.cuevasdearta.com; ✆ **97-184-12-93**) are said to have inspired Jules

Rowing through the Cuevas del Drach.

Verne's 1864 *Journey to the Center of the Earth.* Formed by seawater erosion, the caves are 32m (105 ft.) above sea level, and some chambers rise 46m (151 ft.). You enter a vestibule where torches once used to light the caves have blackened the walls. The **Reina de las Columnas (Queen of the Columns)** rises 22m (72 ft.) and is followed by a lower room called the "Inferno" for its Dante-esque appearance. It is followed by a field of stalagmites and stalactites (the "Purgatory Rooms"), which eventually lead to the "Theater" and "Paradise." The caves were once used by pirates, and centuries ago they provided a haven for Spanish Moors fleeing the persecution of Jaume I. The stairs in the cave were built for Isabel II for her 1860 visit. Tours depart daily May to October, every half-hour from 10am to 6pm, off season 10am to 5pm. Admission is 11€.

IBIZA ★★

Once virtually unknown and unvisited, Ibiza (called Eivissa in Catalán) began to thrive as an art colony in the 1950s and became popular with hippies in the 1960s. Today, it attracts northern European package tourists and is a mecca for gay travelers.

At 585 sq. km (226 sq. miles), Ibiza is the third largest of the Balearic Islands, with a jagged coastline, some fine beaches, whitewashed houses, secluded bays, cliffs, and hilly terrain dotted with fig and olive trees. Warmer than Mallorca, it's a better choice for winter vacation, but can be sweltering in July and August.

Ciudad de Ibiza boasts Playa Talamanca in the north and the white-sandy beaches of Ses Figueretes and Playa d'en Bossa in the south. Las Salinas, in the south, near the old salt flats, offers excellent sands. Playa Cavallet and Aigües Blanques attract nude sunbathers. The long sandy cove of Cala Llonga, south of Santa Eulalia del Río, and the white-sandy beach of El Cana to the north are sacred to Ibiza's sun worshipers. In Formentera, Playa de Mitjorn stretches 5km (3 miles) and is relatively uncrowded. Set against a backdrop of pines and dunes, the pure white sand of Es Pujols makes it the most popular of Ibiza's beaches.

Both soft drugs and hard sex are available here, but there are obvious dangers to both. Visitors can be deported for *irresponsibilidad económica* (no money) or *conducta antisocial* (drunk and disorderly conduct). Some young travelers have forsaken Ibiza in favor of the tiny island of Formentera (p. 731), where they find less harassment. Because of limited lodging options, restaurants, and nightlife, Formentera is most often visited on a day trip from Ibiza.

Essentials

GETTING THERE As with Palma, if you come in July and August, be sure you have a return ticket and a reservation.

Iberia (www.iberia.com; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) flies into **Es Codolar International Airport** (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04**), 5.5km (3½ miles) from Ciudad de Ibiza. Seven daily flights connect Ibiza with Palma de Mallorca. There are two daily flights from Valencia and three from Madrid. With the exception of charter flights, Iberia is the main carrier servicing Ibiza. Its only other competitor is **Air Europa** (www.aireuropa.com; ✆ **90-240-15-01** in Ibiza), which offers flights to Ibiza from Barcelona (a maximum of two flights a day), as well as from Madrid, at less frequent intervals than Iberia. The price of flights varies considerably because of season, promotion, and availability.

Trasmediterránea, Estación Marítima, Andenes del Puerto s/n (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **90-245-46-45**), operates **ferry service** from Barcelona at the rate of four per week; a one-way ticket costs 57€. From Valencia to Ibiza, there is one boat per week, costing 57€ one-way. From Palma, there is one boat on Saturday, which costs 49€ one-way. Check with travel agents in Barcelona, Valencia, or Palma for ferry schedules. You can book tickets through any agent.

GETTING AROUND If you land at Es Cordola Airport outside Ciudad de Ibiza, you will find **bus** service for the 5.5km (3½-mile) ride into town. Sometimes taxis are shared. In Ciudad de Ibiza, buses leave for the airport from Av. Isidor Macabich 24 (by the ticket kiosk), every hour on the hour, daily from 7am to 11:30pm.

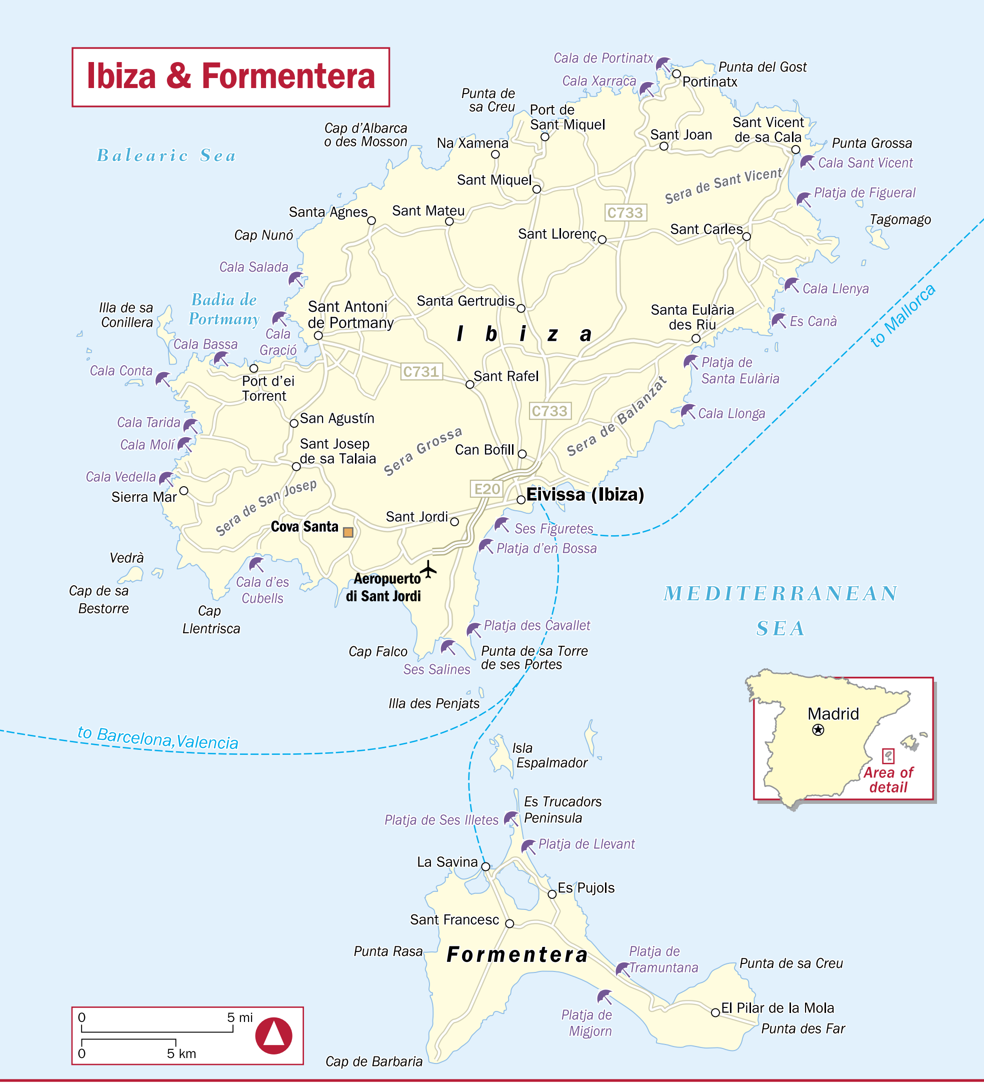
Once in Ibiza, you'll have to walk the compact city, but buses travel to the nearby beaches. The two main bus terminals are at Av. Isidor Macabich 20 and 42 (✆ **97-134-05-10**). Mopeds and bicycles are popular, especially in the southern part of the island. Rentals can be made through **Casa Valentín,** corner of Av. B. V. Ramón 19 (✆ **97-131-08-22**). Mopeds cost from 25€ to 35€ per day. Hertz and Avis have car-rental offices at the airport.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office** is at Antonio Riquer 2, in the port of Ciudad de Ibiza (www.ibiza.travel; ✆ **97-119-19-51**). It's open June to November Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm, Saturday 9:30am to 7:30pm; and December to May Monday to Friday 8:30am to 3pm, Saturday 10:30am to 1pm. There is another office at the airport (✆ **97-180-91-18**), which is open year-round Monday to Saturday 9am to 2pm and 3 to 8pm, Sunday 9am to 2pm.

Ciudad de Ibiza

The island's capital, Ciudad de Ibiza, was founded by the Carthaginians 2,500 years ago. Today the town consists of a lively marina district around the harbor and an Old Town, **D'Alt Vila ★**, with narrow cobblestone streets and flat-roofed, whitewashed houses. The yacht-clogged marina district is full of galleries, shops, bars, and restaurants. You'll see everyone there from fishermen to Ibizan women swathed in black to scantily clad tourists.

Much of the Old Town's medieval character has been preserved. Many houses have Gothic styling and open onto courtyards. These houses, some of which are 500 years old, are often festooned with geraniums and bougainvillea.


Ibiza & Formentera
Balearic Sea
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Cala de Portinatx
Punta del Gost
Portinatx
Cala Xarraca
Punta de sa Creu
Port de Sant Miquel
Cap d'Albarca o des Mosson
Na Xamena
Sant Joan
Sant Vicent de sa Cala
Punta Grossa
Cala Sant Vicent
Sant Miquel
Sera de Sant Vicent
Platja de Figueral
Tagomago
Santa Agnes
Sant Mateu
C733
Sant Carles
Cap Nunó
Sant Llorenç
Cala Salada
Cala Llenya
Badia de Portmany
Sant Antoni de Portmany
Santa Gertrudis
Santa Eulària des Riu
Es Canà
Illa de sa Conillera
Cala Gració
Ibiza
Cala Bassa
Platja de Santa Eulària
to Mallorca
Cala Conta
C731
Sant Rafel
Port d'ei Torrent
Cala Llonga
C733
Cala Tarida
San Agustín
Sera de Balanzat
Cala Molí
Sant Josep de sa Talaia
Sera Grossa
Can Bofill
Cala Vedella
E20
Eivissa (Ibiza)
Sierra Mar
Sera de San Josep
Sant Jordi
Cova Santa
Ses Figuretes
Platja d'en Bossa
Vedrà
Cala d'es Cubells
Aeropuerto di Sant Jordi
Cap de sa Bestorre
Cap Llentrisca
Platja des Cavallet
Cap Falco
Punta de sa Torre de ses Portes
Ses Salines
Illa des Penjats
to Barcelona,Valencia
Madrid
Area of detail
Isla Espalmador
Es Trucadors Peninsula
Platja de Ses Illetes
Platja de Llevant
La Savina
Es Pujols
Sant Francesc
Punta Rasa
Formentera
Platja de Tramuntana
Punta de sa Creu
El Pilar de la Mola
Platja de Migjorn
Punta des Far
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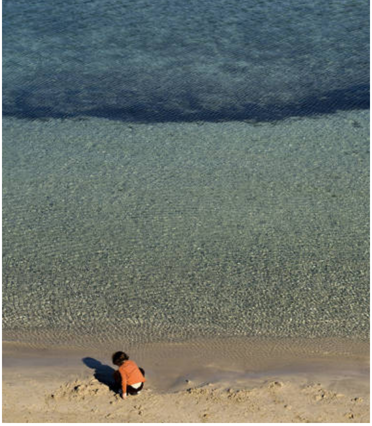
5 mi
0
5 km
Cap de Barbaria

The Old Town is entered through the Puerta de las Tablas, flanked by Roman statues.

Plaça Desamparadors, crowded with open-air restaurants and market stalls, lies at the top of the town. Traffic leaves town through the Portal Nou.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

BEACHES The most popular and crowded beaches are **Playa Talamanca** in the north and **Ses Figueretes** (also called Playa Figueretes) in the south. Don't be surprised to find a lot of nudity. The best beaches are connected by boats and buses. More remote ones are accessed by car or private boat. Both Playa Talamanca and Ses Figueretes are near Ciudad de Ibiza, as is another popular beach, **Playa d'en Bossa,** to the south.



ABOVE: **Ibiza's D'Alt Vila (Old Town).** RIGHT: **The crystal-clear water of Talamanca beach.**

To avoid crowds near Ciudad de Ibiza, continue past Playa d'en Bossa to **Las Salinas,** near the old salt flats farther south. Here, beaches include **Playa Cavallet,** one of the officially designated nudist strands (though nudism doesn't always follow designations of Ibizan law).

The most overcrowded beach in Ibiza is **Playa San Antonio,** at San Antonio de Portmany. However, a boat or bus will take you to several beaches southwest of the town, all far less congested. These include **Cala Bassa, Port des Torrent, Cala Tarida,** and **Cala Conta.**

Santa Eulalia del Río, site of the third major tourist development in Ibiza, has a less crowded beach, but it's also less impressive. If you stay in this east-coast town, head to the beach at Cala Llonga in the south or to one of the beaches along the north, including **Playa d'es Caná** and **Cala Lleña.** These beaches are among the finest on Ibiza.

On the north coast, there are good beaches at the tourist developments of **Portinatx,** at the very northern tip, and at **Puerto de San Miguel,** north of the small town of San Miguel. The quickest way to reach San Miguel from Ciudad de Ibiza is to go inland via Santa Gertrudis, and then head north.

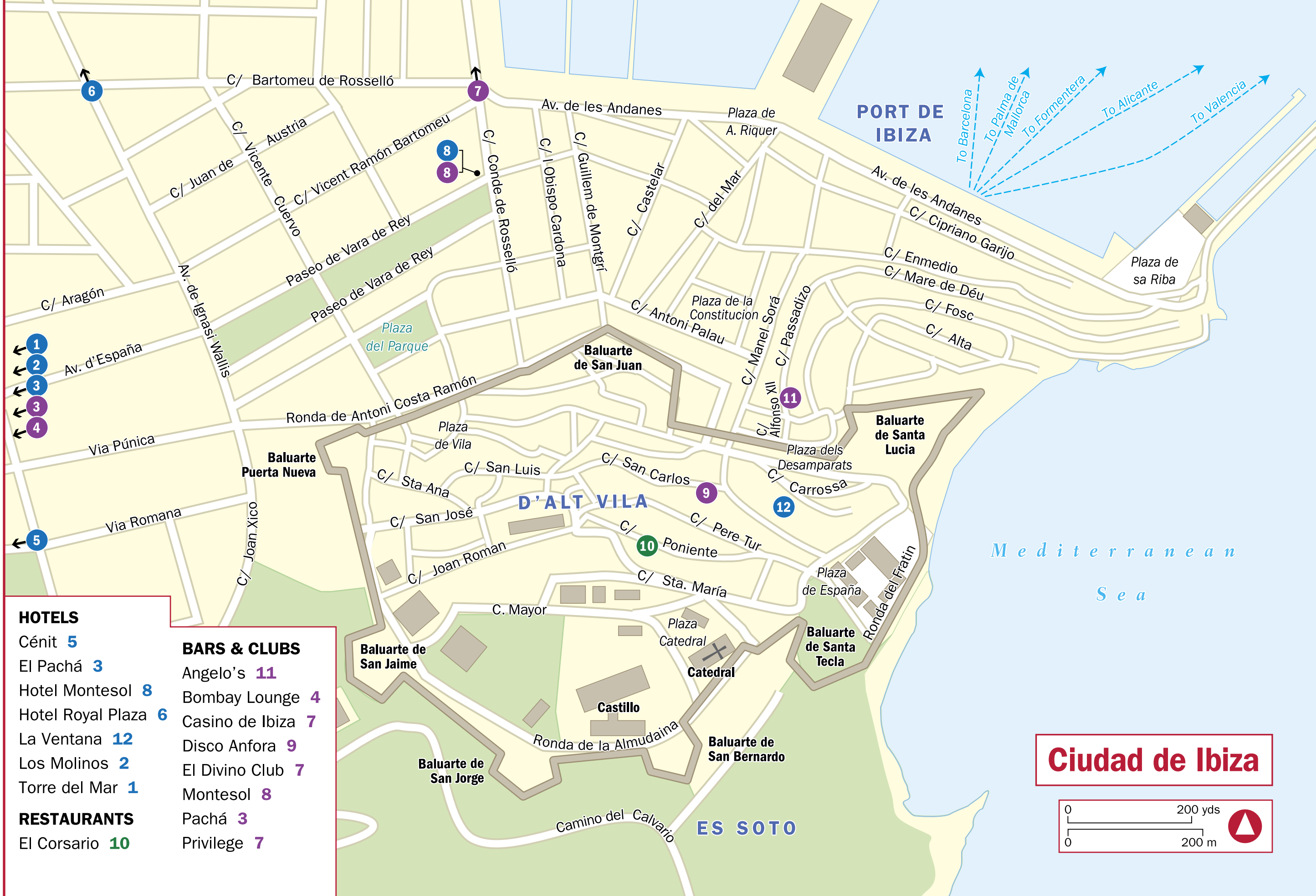
TENNIS Ibiza Club de Campo, Carretera San José Km 4 (✆ **97-130-00-88**), is located 4km (2½ miles) from the center of Ibiza town. It has nine outdoor tennis courts with lights.

EXPLORING CIUDAD DE IBIZA

Ibiza is primarily a beach destination, but one attraction is worth a visit.

Museo Arqueològic de Ibiza y Formentera ★ MUSEUM Located in Ibiza's Old Town, the Museum of Archaeology houses an important collection of Punic remains in a former arsenal. It contains pottery and other artifacts from prehistoric sites in Formentera and Ibiza, and Punic terra-cotta figurines and other items from the sanctuaries of Illa Plana (7th–5th c. B.C.) and Cuieram (4th–2nd c. B.C.). Also on display are vases, figurines, and other Carthaginian artifacts found in the island's burial grounds as well as Roman epigraphs, sculpture, and small glass bottles. Other displays feature Moorish artifacts (10th–13th c. A.D.), Christian wooden and stone sculptures, and 14th- to 16th-century ceramics.

Plaça de la Seu 3. ✆ **97-130-12-31.** Admission 3€ adults, 1.50€ students, free for children 17 and under. Nov–Mar Tues–Sat 9am–3pm, Sun 10am–2pm; Apr–Oct Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 6–8pm, Sun 10am–2pm. Closed holidays.


Ciudad de Ibiza
0 200 yds
0 200 m
PORT DE IBIZA
To Barcelona
To Palma de Mallorca
To Formentera
To Alicante
To Valencia
Mediterranean Sea
Plaza de sa Riba
Av. de les Andanes
C/ Cipriano Garijo
C/ Enmedio
C/ Mare de Déu
C/ Fosc
C/ Alta
Plaza de A. Riquer
C/ del Mar
C/ Castelar
C/ Guillem de Montgrí
C/ I Obispo Cardona
C/ Conde de Rosselló
C/ Bartomeu de Rosselló
Plaza de la Constitucion
C/ Antoni Palau
C/ Manel Sorá
C/ Passadizo
C/ Alfonso XII
Plaza dels Desamparats
C/ Carrossa
Baluarte de Santa Lucia
Baluarte de San Juan
C/ San Carlos
C/ Pere Tur
C/ Poniente
C/ Sta. María
D'ALT VILA
Plaza de España
Ronda del Fratin
Baluarte de Santa Tecla
Plaza Catedral
Catedral
Castillo
C. Mayor
Ronda de la Almudaina
Baluarte de San Bernardo
Baluarte de San Jorge
Baluarte de San Jaime
Camino del Calvario
ES SOTO
Plaza de Vila
C/ San Luis
C/ Sta Ana
C/ San José
C/ Joan Roman
Baluarte Puerta Nueva
Ronda de Antoni Costa Ramón
Plaza del Parque
Paseo de Vara de Rey
C/ Vicent Ramón Bartomeu
C/ Vicente Cuervo
C/ Juan de Austria
Av. de Ignasi Wallis
C/ Aragón
Av. d'España
Via Púnica
Via Romana
C/ Joan Xico
1
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8
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11
12

HOTELS

Cénit	5
El Pachá	3
Hotel Montesol	8
Hotel Royal Plaza	6
La Ventana	12
Los Molinos	2
Torre del Mar	1

RESTAURANTS

El Corsario	10

BARS & CLUBS

Angelo's	11
Bombay Lounge	4
Casino de Ibiza	7
Disco Anfora	9
El Divino Club	7
Montesol	8
Pachá	3
Privilege	7

WHERE TO EAT

Fish has always been the mainstay of the local Mediterranean diet. But budget travelers may be put off by the price. Once the cheapest item you could order on a menu, fish is now one of the most expensive. The fish is sautéed, baked, or broiled, and might be blended into a rice dish called *arroz a la pescadora*. *Parrillada* is a mixed grill of fish, while *zarzuela* is a bouillabaisse-like stew containing an assortment of fish.

Punic vases at Ibiza's Museum of Archaeology.

As in Mallorca, pork is important in the local diet. Some islanders feed figs to these animals to sweeten their meat, which is turned into such pungent cooked sausages as *sabrosadas* or *longanizas*. Another local dish is *sofrit pages*, a stew made with chicken, pork, and lamb cooked with pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and garlic. One of the best seafood plates is *borrida de rajada*, crayfish in an almond sauce. The most famous dessert is *flaó*, akin to American cheesecake but flavored with mint and anise. *Greixonera* is a spiced pudding, and *maccarrones de San Juan* is cinnamon- and lemon-flavored milk baked with cheese.

El Corsario ★ MEDITERRANEAN This dining room with a panoramic view is a romantic favorite. Your taxi deposits you about 152m (500 ft.) down the hill and you must climb slippery cobblestones to reach the 400-year-old villa. The home-style food includes pasta, lamb, and fresh fish brought up from the harbor.

Carrer Ponent 5. ✆ **97-130-12-48.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–32€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 8pm–midnight. Closed Nov–Apr.

SHOPPING

Ibiza developed its nonconformist style in the 1960s by combining elements of traditional local attire with more relaxed hippie garb. In recent years, Ibizan designs have become much more sophisticated and complex, but the individualistic spirit has not wavered. At the corner of Conde Rosselón, artisan Pedro Planells creates hand-sewn leather goods at **Pedro's,** Carre Aníbal 8 (✆ **97-131-30-26**). **Sandal Shop,** Plaça de la Vila 2 (✆ **97-130-54-75**), sells high-quality leather goods made by local artisans. One-of-a-kind accessories, including bejeweled belts and leather bags, are designed for individual clients.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

El Divino, Puerto Ibiza Nueva (www.eldivino-ibiza.com; ✆ **97-131-83-38**), is the most physically beautiful disco on Ibiza. Open daily in summer only, it prides itself on attracting supermodels and other celebs. Wear the most hip outfit you packed. The club doesn't open its doors until midnight; it remains open nightly until 6am. The cover charge is 25€ to 50€ (includes one drink).

The crowd at the **Montesol** hotel bar, Vara de Rey 2 (✆ **97-131-01-61**), a short walk from the harbor on the main street, is likely to include expatriates, newly arrived social climbers, and Spaniards along for the view. If you enjoy people-watching, sit at one of the sidewalk tables. Montesol is open daily from 8am to 11pm.

Although **Pachá,** Av. 8 de Agosto s/n (www.pacha.com/ibiza; ✆ **97-193-21-30**), is one of Ibiza's oldest discos, it's still hip. Three separate bar areas and dance floors, open only in the summer, continue to attract the young and the not-so-young, the bored, and the jaded. Overheated dancers can cool off in a swimming pool. The cover is a painful 37€ to 57€ (includes one drink).

Everyone from supermodels to soccer stars floods into the **Bombay Lounge,** Av. 8 Agosto 23 (www.bombay-lounge.com; ✆ **97-193-12-37**), which is opposite Pachá. With a backdrop of jazz, soul, and house music, it is the most chic cocktail lounge in the city. When in Ibiza, you order fresh *caipirinhas.* If you don't know what a *caipirinha* is, the bartender will explain. Light bites and classic burger and fries are served nightly until 2:30am. The club opens at 10pm, but the A-list patrons show up after midnight. There is no cover.

Privilege, Carretera Sant Antoni Km 7, Urbanización San Rafael (www.privilegeibiza.com; ✆ **97-119-80-86**), is a sprawling nightclub built to entertain 5,000. The interior contains more bars, semisecluded patios, and romantic trysting spots than most hotels. Dance music, however, will conspire to keep you on the floor. The club is open from June to September, daily from midnight to 8am. The cover is 25€ to 45€ (includes one drink).

There's gambling in the modern **Casino de Ibiza,** Carrettera Ibiza-San Antonio at the Juan XXIII Roundabout (www.casinoibiza.com; ✆ **97-131-33-12**). With the usual gaming tables and slot machines, it's open nightly 6pm to 5am. The adjoining nightclub and dining hall offer live cabaret entertainment between May and October, beginning at 11pm. Casino entrance is 5€. A passport is required for admission.

Few islands in the Mediterranean cater to gay travelers as well as Ibiza. Ciudad de Ibiza's Old Town houses dozens of gay bars that are generally open from 10pm to 3am. **Disco Anfora,** Carrer San Carlos 5 (www.disco-anfora.com; ✆ **97-130-28-93**), is a haute electronic disco that blares away between midnight and 6am every summer night. The cover charge of 12€ to 17€ includes the first drink. Another option is **Angelo,** Carrer Alfonso XII no. 11 (www.angeloibiza.com; ✆ **97-131-09-68**).

WHERE TO STAY IN & AROUND CIUDAD DE IBIZA

During the peak summer months, don't show up without a reservation. To ensure an ironclad reservation, ***book through a package tour.*** You might also get a better bargain. Try booking with **Viajes Urbis,** Av. 8 d´Agost s/n, 07800 Ibiza (www.viajesurbis.com; ✆ **97-131-44-12**).

In Town

Cénit 🏷 This is the bargain place to stay. Each pueblo-style floor has been staggered to provide a terrace for the rooms above. The small guest rooms are routine but comfortable, and the beds are firm. The Cénit is perched on a hillside a short walk from the beach.

Carrer Archiduque Luis Salvador s/n, 07800 Ibiza. www.ibiza-spotlight.com/cenit. ✆ **97-130-14-04.** Fax 97-130-07-54. 63 units. 55€–110€ double; 87€–150€ apt. Rates include continental breakfast (in double rooms only). AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Closed mid-Oct to Apr. **Amenities:** Outdoor freshwater pool. *In room:* TV, fridge, kitchenette (in some).

El Pachá ★★ If you like to sleep where you party, stay at this funky hotel that is linked with Pachá, a legend among local dance clubs. The most famous boutique hotel in Ibiza, it has been thoroughly renovated and is right on the Paseo Marítimo fronting the water. Its glitzy design evokes the style of Philippe Starck.

You can meet fellow guests at the pool, most of them wearing the skimpiest of beachwear, if that.

Paseo Marítimo s/n, 07800 Ibiza. www.avantgardehotels.com. ✆ **97-131-59-63.** Fax 97-131-02-53. 57 units. 100€–395€ double; 650€–1,100€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; concierge; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD player (in some), hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Royal Plaza ★ Located 3 blocks from the port, this six-story modern hotel has a casual, resortlike atmosphere. For those who want to stay within Ciudad de Ibiza, this is a premier choice. The marble reception lobby exudes elegance. Well-appointed guest rooms with firm beds are midsize and carpeted; most have private terraces. The rooftop pool offers a sunbathing platform, with commanding views of the port and town.

Carrer Pedro Francés 27–29, 07800 Ibiza. www.royalplaza.es. ✆ **800/528-1234** in the U.S., or 97-131-00-00. Fax 97-131-40-95. 117 units. 118€–208€ double; 220€–415€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

La Ventana ★ This is a perfect name ("the Window") for what was once a castle and is now a hotel on the hillside of the Old City, overlooking the Mediterranean. The owners have decorated the hotel very stylishly with clever lighting, beautiful fittings, and Asian objets d'art. The rooms are painted in wonderful, almost Indian colors and have beds with floating canopies of white net. There's a terrace on the roof with wide Moroccan-style sofas and an amazing view of the Old City and the sea beyond.

Sa Carrossa 13, Dalt Vila, 07800 Ibiza. www.laventanaibiza.com. ✆ **97-139-08-57.** Fax 97-139-01-45. 14 units. Winter 95€–135€ double, 220€ suite; summer 165€–280€ double, 450€ suite. AE, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

In Playa de Ses Figueretes

Los Molinos ★ This modern resort is nestled between the water and a medieval village less than a mile from Ciudad de Ibiza. It is the finest hotel in Ses Figueretes. The midsize accommodations, most with private terraces facing the sea, are comfortably furnished, with twin beds pushed together European-style.

Ramón Muntaner 60, 07800 Ibiza. www.thbhotels.com. ✆ **97-130-22-50.** Fax 97-130-25-04. 168 units. 92€–246€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; exercise room; Jacuzzi; freshwater pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Escaping from the Hordes

If you want to escape to a lovely beach without hotel construction, head for **Playa Benirras,** just north of Port de Sant Miquel. An unpaved but passable road leads out to this small, calm, pretty cove, where lounge chairs are available and pedal boats are for rent. On the beach are snack bars and restaurants.

In Es Vivé

Torre del Mar Lying 2km (1¼ miles) from the center of the city, opening onto a wide sandy beach, it's like a Florida resort hotel with absolutely no island character. But it attracts beach lovers who like lots of facilities and comfort. The beach, De'en Bossa, is one of the largest on the island. Guest rooms are a bit small but have sea or mountain views.

Platja D'en Bossa s/n, 07819 Es Vivé, Ibiza. www.hoteltorredelmar.com. ✆ **97-130-30-50.** Fax 97-130-40-60. 213 units. 180€–230€ double. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed mid-Oct to Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; exercise room; Jacuzzi; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

The Northern Coast

Except for a few coves, the north is less traveled by tourists. You'll find some of the island's prettiest countryside, with fields of olive, almond, and carob trees and the occasional *finca* raising melons or grapes.

EXPLORING THE NORTHERN COAST

Off the road leading into Port de Sant Miquel (Puerto de San Miguel) is **Cova de Can Marçà** (www.covadecanmarsa.com; ✆ **97-133-47-76**). After a stunning descent down stairs clinging to the cliff's face, you enter a cave that's more than 100,000 years old and forms its stalactites and stalagmites at the rate of about .6 centimeters (¼ in.) per 100 years. A favored hiding place for smugglers and their goods in former days, it's now a beautifully orchestrated surrealistic experience—and includes a sound-and-light display. The half-hour tour is conducted in several languages for groups of up to 70. From Holy Week to the end of October, tours are offered daily every half-hour from 10:30am to 6pm. Admission is 8€ for adults and 4.50€ for children.

Deserted Benirras beach, outside Port de Sant Miquel.

At the island's northern tip is **Portinatx,** a series of beaches and bays marred by a string of shops and haphazardly built hotels. For a taste of its rugged beauty, go past the construction to the jagged coast along the open sea.

Every Saturday year-round there is a **flea market** just beyond Sant Carles (San Carlos), on the road to Santa Eulalia. Open from about 10am until 8 or 9pm, it offers vintage and new clothing, crafts, and the usual odds and ends.

A beautiful drive leads from Sant Carles along the coast to Cala Sant Vicent (San Vicente).

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Hacienda Na Xamena ★★★ Located 23km (14 miles) northwest of Ciudad de Ibiza, this Moorish villa, set on a promontory overlooking Na Xamena Bay, is favored by well-heeled travelers and celebrities seeking luxury, informality, privacy, and personal service. Public rooms are filled with cubbyholes, ideal for cozying up to a book or travel companion. Spacious guest rooms are decorated with four-poster beds and sumptuous carpets, and have balconies overlooking the Mediterranean.

Na Xamena s/n, 07815 San Miguel, Ibiza. www.hotelhacienda-ibiza.com. ✆ **97-133-45-00.** Fax 97-133-45-14. 65 units. 240€–585€ double; 460€–1,860€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 4 restaurants; bar; babysitting; bikes; exercise room; 3 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; spa; outdoor tennis court (lit). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Santa Eulalia del Río

Santa Eulalia is at the foot of the Puig de Missa, on the estuary of the only river in the Balearics. The principal monument in town is a fortress church standing on a hilltop, or *puig*. Dating from the 16th century, it has an ornate Gothic altar screen.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE During the day, **buses** run between Ciudad de Ibiza and Santa Eulalia del Río every hour; a one-way fare costs 2€. You catch the bus at Avenida D'Isidor Macabich.

Seven **boats** a day run between Ciudad de Ibiza and Santa Eulalia del Río. The boats run on the hour, and the first leaves Ciudad de Ibiza at 10:30am and Santa Eulalia del Río at 9:30am. The boat ride takes 45 minutes. For information, call ✆ **61-649-66-06.**

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist information office,** at Marià Riquer Wallis 4 (✆ **97-133-07-28**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm. In summer the office is open Sunday to Friday 9:30am to 1:30pm and 5 to 7:30pm, and Saturday 10am to 1pm.

EXPLORING SANTA EULALIA DEL RÍO

You can reach the famous northern beaches from Santa Eulalia by bus or boat, departing from the harbor near the boat basin. **Aigües Blanques,** one of the best beaches, is 10km (6¼ miles) north. (It's legal to go nude here.) There are four buses a day. A long, sandy cove, **Cala Llonga,** is 5km (3 miles) south and is serviced by 12 buses a day. Cala Llonga fronts a bevy of package-tour hotels, so it's often crowded. Boats depart Santa Eulalia for Cala Llonga every 30 minutes, from 9am to 6pm. **Es Caná** is a white-sand beach, 5km (3 miles) north of town; boats and buses leave every 30 minutes, from 8am to 9pm. Four buses a day depart for **Cala Lleñya** and **Cala Nova.**

WHERE TO EAT & STAY IN & AROUND SANTA EULALIA DEL RÍO

Catalonia Ses Estaques This much-favored hotel is close to the seashore at the edge of town. On the walk to the private beach, you pass a beautiful garden filled with roses, palms, and ivy. The swimming pool is edged with pines and a poolside snack bar. Inside the hotel there's an aquarium in the spacious lobby. Each of the comfortable terrazzo-floored rooms has a balcony with a view of the garden or the sea. The hotel attracts many retirees. Children 15 and under are not permitted.

Ses Estaques s/n, 07840 Santa Eulalia del Río, Ibiza. www.hoteles-catalonia.es. ✆ **97-133-02-00.** Fax 97-133-04-86. 217 units. 160€–220€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; outdoor pool; outdoor tennis court; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

El Naranjo ★ CONTINENTAL This chic nighttime rendezvous has the most beautiful courtyard in town, with flowering bougainvillea vines. Menu items are beautifully prepared and served. Dishes include fresh fish, as well as duckling in red-currant-and-pepper sauce. Begin with *las tres mousses* (three mousses), and finish with the lemon tart for dessert.

Carrer San José 31. www.restauranteelnaranjo.net. ✆ **97-133-03-24.** Reservations required. Main courses 19€–27€; menú degustación 51€–75€. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Sun 1:30–3:30pm and 7:30–11:30pm. Closed Jan 7–Feb 2.

Sol S'Argamassa ★ ☺ Three kilometers (1¾ miles) outside Santa Eulalia del Río, near Roman ruins, the Hotel S'Argamassa is a well-run, family-oriented resort. It is a short walk from the beach and maintains its own small pier. All the midsize guest rooms have terraces with sea views. The hotel has no restaurant, but dining options are nearby.

Urbanización S'Argamassa s/n, 07182 Santa Eulalia del Río, Ibiza. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **97-133-00-51.** Fax 97-133-00-76. 217 units. 78€–185€ double; 133€–224€ suite. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Closed Oct–Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; 2 outdoor freshwater pools; 2 outdoor tennis courts; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Santa Gertrudis de Fruitera

Don't blink or you'll pass right through this hamlet lying inland and to the west of Santa Eulalia del Río. With crafts shops and fine bars, it's a good option if you'd like to see what an island village looks like. It is also home to one of the island's most enchanting retreats, Cas Gasi.

The specialty of Santa Gertrudis: *bocadillo completo.*

WHERE TO STAY

Cas Gasi ★ 🎁 This 19th-century manorial hacienda sits amid olive groves, almond trees, and gardens. In summer, guests take in the view from porches and terraces, but retreat in winter to the living room with its roaring fireplace. The *casa* has two swimming pools surrounded by garden terraces. Breezy and spacious guest rooms offer brass beds, hand-painted wall tiles and handmade terra-cotta floor tiles. Dinner can be served by advance request, and breakfast is offered on a terrace.

Cami Vell a Sant Mateau s/n, Apartado 117, 07814 Santa Gertrudis, Ibiza. www.casgasi.com. ✆ **97-119-77-00.** Fax 97-119-78-99. 10 units. 180€–399€ double; 455€–750€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; exercise room; 2 outdoor pools; spa; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, CD player, hair dryer, minibar.

FORMENTERA ★

For years, Formentera was known as the "forgotten Balearic." The smallest island of the archipelago, it's a 78-sq.-km (30-sq.-mile) flat limestone plain. In the east it is flanked by **La Mola,** a peak rising 187m (614 ft.), and in the west it is protected by Berberia, at 96m (315 ft.).

The Romans called it Frumentaria (meaning "wheat granary") when they oversaw it as a booming little agricultural center. But a shortage of water, coupled with strong winds, has allowed only meager vegetation to grow, notably fig trees and fields of wild rosemary. A few hearty goats live on the island.

Like Ibiza, Formentera has a salt industry. Its year-round population of 5,000 swells in summer, mostly with day-trippers from Ibiza. Limited hotels have kept development in check, and most visitors come over for the day to enjoy the beaches, where they often swim and sunbathe without bathing suits.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Formentera is serviced by up to 36 **boat** passages a day in summer and about eight per day in winter. Boats depart from Ciudad de Ibiza, on Ibiza's southern coast, for La Savina, 3km (1¾ miles) north of the island's capital and largest settlement, Sant Francesc (San Francisco Javier). Passage across the 5km (3-mile) channel separating the islands takes between 35 minutes and 1 hour. A round-trip fare costs from 42€. For information, contact **Trasmapi** (www.trasmapi.com; ✆ **90-231-44-33**), or check at your hotel.

GETTING AROUND As ferryboats arrive at the quays of La Savina, taxis line up at the pier. One-way passage to such points as Es Pujols and Playa de Mitjorn costs 10€ to 15€; negotiate the fare in advance. To call a taxi in Sant Francesc, dial ✆ **97-132-20-16,** or in La Savina, ✆ **97-132-20-02.** They are often slow to arrive.

Car rentals can be arranged through **Formotor** (www.formotor.com; ✆ **97-132-29-29**), whose kiosk is at La Savina, close to where you disembark from the ferryboats.

You can rent bicycles and motor scooters from **MotoRent Migjorn,** in La Savina (www.motorentmigjorn.com; ✆ **97-132-11-11**), or from **MotoRent Pujols,** in Pujols (www.motorentpujols.com; ✆ **97-132-21-38**). Motor scooters rent for 25€ to 65€ per day, bicycles for around 6€ to 10€ per day.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office** at Calle de Calpe s/n, in Port de La Savina (www.formentera.es; ✆ **97-132-20-57**), is open Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm and 5 to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 2pm.

Exploring Formentera

Beaches, beaches, and more beaches—that's why visitors come here. You can see the ocean from any point on the island. Formentera has been declared a "World Treasure" by UNESCO, one of four places so honored because of its special character as an ecological and wildlife preserve.

Playa de Mitjorn, on the southern coast, is 5km (3 miles) long and is the principal area for nude sunbathing. A few bars and hotels occupy the relatively undeveloped stretch of sand. You can make **Es Copinyars,** the name of one of the beachfronts, your stop for lunch.

At **Es Calo,** along the northern coast, west of El Pilar, there are some small boardinghouses, called *hostales.* From here you can see the lighthouse of La Mola, which was featured in Jules Verne's *Journey Round the Solar System.*

The town of Sant Ferran serves the beach of **Es Pujols,** darling of the package-tour operators. This is the most crowded beach on Formentera, with pure white sand and a backdrop of dunes and pine trees. It's a good place to go windsurfing.

Playa de Mitjorn at dusk.

Westward, **Cala Sahona** is another popular tourist spot, lying near the lighthouse on Cabo Berberia. Often pleasure vessels anchor here on what is the most beautiful cove in Formentera.

Where to Eat

Juan y Andrea ★ SEAFOOD This restaurant right on the beach in a natural park has been run by the same family for more than 25 years. Patrons can select a lobster from a big tank. Grilled shellfish and fresh fish are prepared to perfection. *Arroz negro* (rice with squid ink) and *labuna a la sal* (sea bass cooked in salt to preserve its juice) are two specialties.

Playa Illetas, Carretera la Savina s/n, Es Pujols. www.juanyandrea.com. ✆ **97-118-71-30**. Reservations recommended June–Aug. Main courses 20€–35€. AE, MC, V. Daily 12:30–3:30pm and 7:30–11pm. Closed Oct 16–Apr.

Sa Palmera SPANISH/INTERNATIONAL Lying along Playa Es Pujols, this rustically decorated restaurant specializes in fresh fish of the day, which can be grilled or served in an herb-flavored green sauce. Another specialty is a *zarzuela* of *mariscos,* a seafood stew flavored with tomatoes, white wine, and fish broth. Meat lovers enjoy Argentine-style barbecued beef or beef loin served with onions, tomatoes, and peppers.

Playa Es Pujols. ✆ **97-132-83-56.** Main courses 10€–28€. MC, V. Apr–Oct Tues–Sun 12:30–11pm. Closed Nov–Mar.

Where to Stay

Hotel Club Punta Prima ★★ Built in 1987 in a low-slung, two-story format hugging the coastline a short walk from the beach, this hotel offers good-size, comfortably furnished rooms, each with an excellent bed.

Punta Prima s/n, 07871 Sant Ferran, Formentera. www.hotel-formentera.com. ✆ **97-132-82-44.** Fax 97-132-82-69. 96 units. 120€–210€ double; 150€–258€ apt. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Closed Nov–May. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; concierge; outdoor saltwater pool; room service; outdoor tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Riu La Mola This hotel at Es Arenals opens onto the longest beach on the island, Playa de Migjorn. La Mola is designed in the style of a Spanish village. The good-size rooms are comfortable and well furnished, each with a firm bed.

Apartado 23, 07840 Playa de Migjorn, Formentera. www.riu.com. ✆ **97-132-70-00.** Fax 97-132-70-01. 328 units. 105€–310€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast and dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; 2 outdoor freshwater pools; 2 outdoor tennis courts (lit); limited watersports rentals. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Sa Volta This small, inexpensive *hostal* features good, clean, modest guest rooms and neatly kept bathrooms with shower stalls. It has no restaurant, but you are right in the tourist belt of Formentera.

Av. Miramar 94, 07871 Es Pujols, Formentera. www.savolta.com. ✆ **97-132-81-25.** Fax 97-132-82-28. 25 units. 90€–160€ double; 160€–240€ junior suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Jan–Feb. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bikes; outdoor freshwater pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

MENORCA ★★

Menorca (also written "Minorca") is one of the most beautiful islands in the Mediterranean. Its principal city is **Mahón** (also called Maó; pop. 25,000), set on a rocky bluff overlooking the great port, which was fought over for centuries by the British, French, and Spanish.

Although barely 15km (9⅓ miles) wide and less than 52km (32 miles) long, Menorca is the second largest of the Spanish Balearic Islands. It also has more beaches than Mallorca, Ibiza, and Formentera combined. Stretching along 217km (135 miles) of pine-fringed coastline, the beaches are the island's greatest attraction, although many are not connected by roads. Nude bathing is commonplace, though officially illegal. Our favorite beach is **Cala'n Porter,** 11km (6¾ miles) west of Mahón. Towering promontories guard the slender estuary where this spectacular beach is found. Another of Menorca's treasures, **Cala de Santa Galdana,** is 23km (14 miles) south of Ciudadela. Its gentle bay and excellent sandy beach afford the most scenic spot on the island.

Menorca has about 60,000 permanent inhabitants and hosts half a million visitors a year. But it is not overrun with tourist developments. The island has some industry, including leatherwork, costume-jewelry production, dairy farming, and even gin manufacturing. Life here is quiet and relaxed. Some clubs in Ibiza don't even open until 4am, but on Menorca nearly everybody, local and visitor alike, is in bed well before then.

In addition to trips to the beach, there are some fascinating things to do for those interested in history, archaeology, music, and art. Many artists live in Menorca, and exhibitions of their work are listed regularly in the local paper. The Catedral de Santa María in Mahón has one of Europe's great pipe organs, at which world-famous organists have given free concerts. Golf, tennis, and sailing are available at reasonable fees.

Essentials

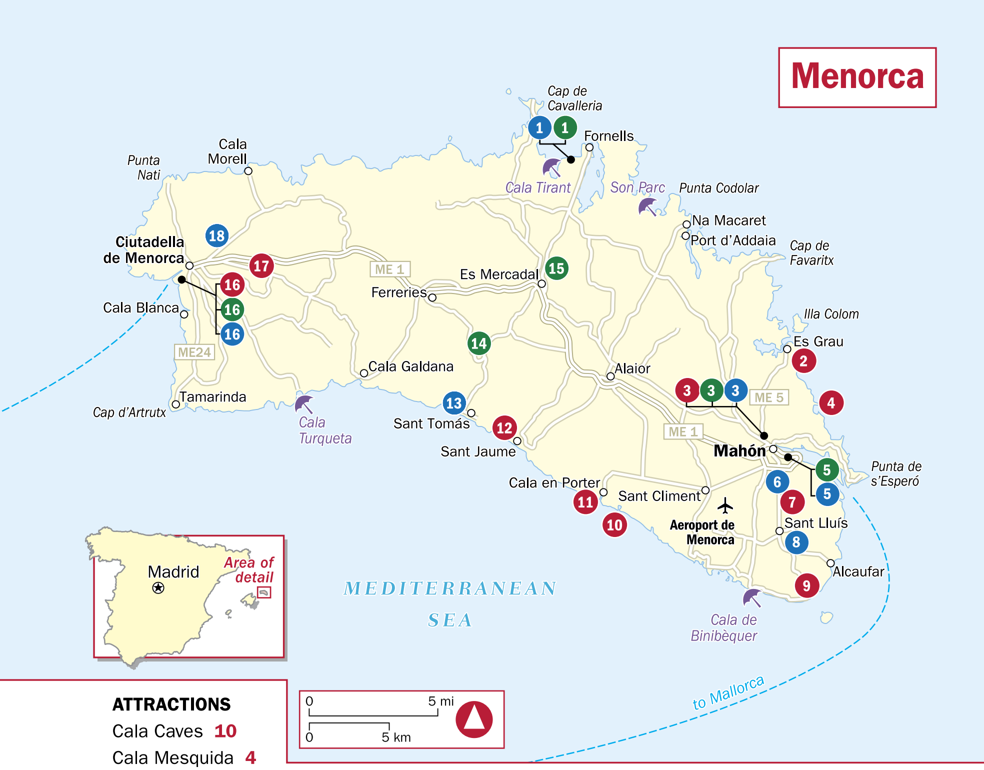
GETTING THERE Menorca, lying off the eastern coast of Spain and northeast of Mallorca, is reached by air or sea. It is quickest to fly, but you can take a ferry from mainland Spain or from Ibiza or Mallorca.

It is always good to arrive with everything arranged in advance—hotel rooms, car rentals, ferry, or airplane tickets.

Menorca International Airport (www.aena.es; ✆ **90-240-47-04** for information) is 3km (1¾ miles) outside the city of Mahón. It receives dozens of charter flights from Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, and Britain. Flights from Barcelona to Menorca are operated by **Vueling** (www.vueling.com; ✆ **807-200-100**). **Air Nostrum** (www.airnostrum.es; ✆ **90-240-05-00**) flies between Menorca and Palma de Mallorca and Madrid.

Regular **ferry service,** which operates frequently in the summer, connects Menorca with Barcelona, and with Palma de Mallorca. From Barcelona, the journey takes 9 hours aboard moderately luxurious lines. If you're on a real budget, bunk in a four-person cabin, which is about the same price as a chair in the lounge.

The ferry service is operated by **Trasmediterránea,** whose offices in Mahón are at Estació Marítim, along Moll (Andén) de Ponent (www.trasmediterranea.es; ✆ **97-136-29-50**); it's open Monday to Friday 8am to 1pm and 5 to 7pm. Saturday hours are 7 to 10pm, and Sunday it's open 2:30 to 5pm, but only to receive the ferry from Valencia. Any travel agency in Barcelona, Palma, or even Ibiza, can book you a ticket.


Menorca
Cap de Cavalleria
Fornells
Cala Tirant
Son Parc
Punta Codolar
Punta Nati
Cala Morell
Na Macaret
Port d'Addaia
Cap de Favaritx
Ciutadella de Menorca
Cala Blanca
ME 1
Es Mercadal
Ferreries
Illa Colom
Es Grau
ME24
Cala Galdana
Alaior
ME 5
Tamarinda
Cap d'Artrutx
Cala Turqueta
Sant Tomás
Sant Jaume
ME 1
Mahón
Punta de s'Esperó
Cala en Porter
Sant Climent
Aeroport de Menorca
Sant Lluís
Alcaufar
Madrid
Area of detail
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Cala de Binibèquer
to Mallorca
0
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ATTRACTIONS

Cala Caves	10
Cala Mesquida	4
Cala'n Porter	11
Catedral	16
Església de San Francisco	16
Església de Santa María la Major	3
Es Grau	2
Naveta d'es Tudons	17
Plaça d'Alfons III	16
Punta Prima	9
Torre d'en Gaumés	12
Trepucó	7
Xoriguer Gin Distillery	3

RESTAURANTS

Ca N'Olga	15
Cas Quintu	16
Es Caliu Grill	16
Es Pla	1
Jàgaro	3
La Minerva	5
Restaurant/Café Balear	16
S'Algaret	1
S'Engolidor	14
Tritón	16

HOTELS

Artiem Hotel Capri	3
Biniarroca Country House Hotel	8
Hesperia Patricia	16
Hotel Port Mahón	5
Hotel Rural Sant Ignasi	18
Hotel Santo Tomás	13
Hotel Sol Menorca	13
Sant Joan de Binissaida	6
Sol Gavilanes	13

GETTING AROUND **Transportes Menorca (TMSA),** Cí Rodees 5, Mahón (www.tmsa.es; ✆ **97-136-04-75**), operates **bus** service around the island. The tourist office (see below) has complete bus schedules for the island.

The Spanish-owned **Atesa** (www.atesa.es; ✆ **97-136-62-13**) operates a rental-car desk at the airport, charging from 50€ to 117€ for its cheaper models. **Avis** (www.avis.com; ✆ **97-136-15-76**) operates out of the airport, asking from 58€ for its cheapest cars per day. Car-rental firms will deliver a vehicle to the airport or to your hotel, but you must specify in advance.

To summon a local taxi, call ✆ **97-136-71-11.** The taxi stop is at Plaça s'Esplanada in Mahón. The typical one-way fare—say, from Mahón to the beaches at Cala'n Porter—is 18€.

Mahón

With gorgeous Georgian architecture, Mahón (Maó) and neighboring Villacarlos still show traces of British occupation. The largest city on the island, Mahón is an east-coast port. It was built on the site of an old castle on a cliff overlooking one of Europe's finest natural harbors, some 5.5km (3½ miles) long. The castle and the town wall erected to dissuade pirates are long gone, except for the archway of San Roque. The first Christian king from the mainland, Alfonso II, established a base in the harbor in 1287. It became known as **Isla del Rey (Island of the King).** Since 1722, Mahón has been the capital of Menorca.

Boats docked in Mahón.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE From the airport (see above), you must take a **taxi** into Mahón—there is no bus link. The approximate cost is 40€.

Mahón is the **bus** transport depot for the island, with departures from Calle José Anselmo Clave in the heart of town. The most popular run—seven buses per day in summer, four buses per day in winter—is to Ciudadela, but there are connections to other parts of the island. The tourist office distributes a list of schedules, and the list is published in the local newspaper, *Menorca Diario Insular.* Tickets cost 5€ and are purchased once you're aboard. Make sure you carry some change.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** at Nord 4 (✆ **90-292-90-15**), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm and 5 to 7pm, Saturday 9am to 1pm.

CITY LAYOUT The heart of Mahón is the Plaça de la Constitució, with its Town Hall from the 18th century, constructed in an English Palladian style.

Plaça s'Esplanada, seat of the tourist office, is actually the main square. On Sunday, locals gather here to enjoy ice cream, the best in the Balearics. In summer, an artisans market is held on Tuesday and Saturday 9am to 2pm. The northern boundary of the city is formed by **Puerto de Mahón,** which has many restaurants and shops along Muelle Comercial. Mahón is not a beach town, but it has some hotels and is the center of the best shopping and nightclubs. The closest beaches for swimming are those at **Es Grau** and **Cala Mesquida.**

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

BEACHES **Cala'n Porter,** 11km (6¾ miles) west of Mahón, is one of the most spectacular beaches on the island. It's a sandy beach at a narrow estuary inlet protected by high promontories. **La Cova d'en Xoroi,** ancient troglodyte habitations overlooking the sea from the upper part of the cliffs, can also be visited (p. 744). Going around the cliff face, you'll discover the **Cala Caves.** People still live in some of these caves, and there are boat trips to see them from Cala'n Porter.

North of Mahón on the road to Fornells you'll encounter many beachside settlements. Close to Mahón, and already being exploited, is **Cala Mesquida,** one of the best beaches. To reach it, turn off the road to Cala Llonga and follow the signs to playa.

The next fork in the road takes you to **Es Grau,** another fine beach. Along the way you see the salt marshes of S'Albufera, abundant in migrant birds. Reached by bus from Mahón, Es Grau, 8km (5 miles) north of Mahón, opens onto a sandy bay and is crowded in July and August. From Es Grau you can take a boat to **Illa d'en Colom,** an island in the bay with some good beaches.

South of Mahón is the little town of Sant Lluís and the large sandy beach to the east, **Punta Prima.** Favored by local people, this beach is serviced by buses from Mahón, with six departures daily. The same buses will take you to an attractive necklace of beaches, the **Platges de Son Bou,** on the southern shore. Many tourist facilities are found here (p. 743).

GOLF The only course is **Golf Son Parc** (www.golfsonparc.com; ✆ **97-118-88-75**), an 18-hole course.

GUIDED TOURS The best way to see Mahón's port is to take an hour-long **catamaran tour** offered by **Yellow Catamarans,** Moll de Llevant 12 (www.yellowcatamarans.com; ✆ **97-135-23-07**). The cost is 10€ for adults, 5€ for children 10 and under. Part of the sailing craft's hull contains glass windows below the waterline offering views of underwater life. Tours run May to October at 10:30am, and then continue on the hour until 4pm.

WINDSURFING & SAILING The best spots are at Fornells Bay, which is 1.6km (1 mile) wide and several miles long. **WindFornells,** Nov 33, Es Mercadal (www.windfornells.com; ✆ **97-118-81-50**), supplies gear.

EXPLORING MAHÓN

The **Església de Santa María la Major,** Plaça Constitució (✆ **97-136-39-49**), was founded in 1287 by Christian conqueror Alfonso III. Over the years, the original Gothic structure has been much altered, and it was rebuilt in 1772. Its celebrated organ with four keyboards and more than 3,000 pipes was constructed by Swiss artisan Johan Kyburz in 1810. A music festival in July and August showcases the organ, which can be heard in nearby cafes. The church is open daily 8am to 1pm and 6 to 8:30pm (donations accepted).

You can also visit the **Xoriguer Gin Distillery,** on the harborfront at Moll de Ponent 91 (✆ **97-136-21-97**), to see how the famed Menorcan gin is made in giant copper vats that simmer over wood-fed fires. The distillery and a store selling the products, including potent liqueurs, is open Monday to Friday 8am to 7pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

The best way to see the rest of the port is by **catamaran** (see above). For a look into **prehistoric Menorca,** there are also several megalithic sites outside of town (p. 739).

WHERE TO EAT

Fish and seafood form most of the basis of the Menorcan diet. The most elegant dish, *caldereta de langosta,* consists of pieces of lobster blended with onion, tomato, pepper, and garlic, and flavored with an herb liqueur.

Shellfish paella is also popular, as are *escupinas* ("warty Venus"), a local shellfish. *Tordos con col* (thrushes with cabbage) are served in autumn. A peasant dish, *pa amb oli,* often precedes a meal. This is bread flavored with salt and olive oil and rubbed with fresh tomato.

Wine is brought in from mainland Spain, but gin is made on the island, a legacy of the British occupation. You can drink the gin by itself or mix it with lemon and ice. For the latter, ask the bartender for *palloza* (pronounced pah-*yoh*-thah). Gin mixed with soda or lemonade is called a *pomada.*

Jàgaro ★★ SEAFOOD/MENORCAN The seafood menu here is Menorca's most eclectic and interesting. Begin with *ensalada templada con cigalitos y setas,* a mix of warm prawns and wild mushrooms served on a bed of lettuce; or Jàgaro's interpretation of gazpacho, flavored with shrimp and melon. Main courses may include *carpaccio de mero* (grouper) served with a tangy green-mustard sauce, *caldereta de langosta,* or *ortigas* (sea anemones). Meat dishes, including duck *maigret* (breast) in orange sauce and foie gras with sweet-and-sour sauce, are also very appealing.

Moll de Llevant 334. ✆ **97-136-23-90.** Reservations recommended. Main courses 15€–50€. AE, DC, MC, V. Apr–Sept daily noon–4pm and 8pm–midnight; Oct–Mar Tues–Sun noon–4pm, Tues–Sat 8pm–midnight.

La Minerva ★ CATALÁN This cozy traditional restaurant on the docks specializes in fresh shellfish. You might enjoy the freshly made house special: a salad of prawns, avocado, black olives, radicchio, and hearts of palm. Some flavor-filled meat dishes appear on the menu, including pork loin with fresh plums or meatballs in an almond sauce. An excellent grouper dish is baked with slices of garlic in an oil or vinegar sauce, and served with an aromatic ratatouille.

Moll del Llevant 87. www.restaurantelaminerva.com. ✆ **97-135-19-95.** Reservations required. Main courses 18€–38€; tasting menu 25€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1:30–3:30pm and 8–11:30pm.

WHERE TO STAY

In Town

Artiem Hotel Capri If you don't stay at Hotel Port Mahón (see below), this comfortable, modern hotel in the heart of Mahón is next best. Each simple room is comfortably but blandly furnished with conservative furniture, and each has a private balcony. It's well managed by a local family. Unlike many hotels on the island, this one is in the commercial core of Mahón and therefore it caters to business travelers. It has a more urban focus than hotels geared only to the resort trade.

Carrer Sant Esteve 8, 07703 Mahón, Menorca. www.rtmhotels.com. ✆ **97-136-14-00.** Fax 97-135-08-53. 75 units. 91€–226€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; exercise room; outdoor freshwater heated pool; room service; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

Hotel Port Mahón ★ Perched on a hillside above the harbor, this hotel looks like a large Georgian villa and offers the most traditional lodging in Menorca. It's one of the few large hotels that stays open year-round, and half of its rooms are usually reserved for tour groups. Some guests have been coming here since the 1950s to enjoy the hotel's sense of calm and unhurried comfort. Guest rooms overlook the harbor, the bougainvillea-filled garden, or the quiet street outside. Each unit has an ornate balcony with louvered shutters and potted flowers.

Av. Fort de L'Eau s/n, 07701 Mahón, Menorca. www.sethotels.com. ✆ **97-136-26-00.** Fax 97-135-10-50. 82 units. 108€–182€ double; 160€–234€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. No parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; outdoor freshwater heated pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar, Wi-Fi (free).

On the Outskirts

Biniarroca Country House Hotel ★★★ 🎁 The most romantic hotel on the island is set in a flowery, lavender-scented garden. Two Roman-style pools add a hedonistic note. The hotel lies on the outskirts of Sant Lluís, directly south of Mahón. Artworks, such as impressionist oil paintings, are harmoniously blended with modern design to create a restful retreat. Garden rooms are individually decorated and contain private terraces. Classic doubles lie in the main house. Children 15 and under are not allowed at the hotel.

Cami Vella 57, 07710 Sant Lluís, Menorca. http://biniarroca.com. ✆ **97-115-12-50.** 18 units. 100€–295€ double; 240€–350€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; bikes; concierge; 2 outdoor pools; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD (in some), fridge (in some), Wi-Fi (free).

Sant Joan de Binissaida ★★ 🎁 Approached on a roadway flanked by fig trees and chinaberry, this beautifully restored antique farmhouse is 15km (9⅓ miles) south of Mahón, between the villages of Sant Lluís and Es Castell. The rooms are tasteful, elegant, and often feature antiques. Stables have been converted to accommodate more guests, but, in spite of their individual terraces, these are less desirable than units in the main house. There is much of a house-party feel about the place in summer.

Cami de Binissaida 108, 07720 Es Castell, Menorca. http://santjoan.binissaida.com. ✆ **97-135-55-98.** Fax 97-135-50-01. 12 units. 130€–260€ double; 170€–320€ junior suite; 210€–360€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; outdoor freshwater pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD, fridge, Wi-Fi (free).

SIDE TRIPS FROM MAHÓN

From Mahón you can take excursions to some of the prehistoric relics in the area. One of these, marked off the Mahón-Villacarlos highway, is **Trepucó,** where you'll find both a 4m (13-ft.) *taula* (huge *T*-shaped stone structure) and a *talayot* (circular stone tower). The megalithic monuments stand on the road to Sant Lluís, only about 1.6km (1 mile) from Mahón. Of all the prehistoric remains on the island, this site is the easiest to visit.

Another legacy of prehistoric people can be visited at Km 4 (a stone marker) off the Mahón-Ciudadela highway. The trail to **Talatí de Dalt** is marked. Your path will lead to this *taula* with subterranean caves.

Yet another impressive prehistoric monument is **Torre d'en Gaumés,** 15km (9⅓ miles) from Mahón off the route to Son Bou. (The path is signposted.) You can take a bus from Mahón to Son Bou if you don't have a car. This megalithic settlement spreads over many acres, including both *taulas* and *talayots,* along with ancient caves in which people once lived. The exact location is 3km (1¾ miles) south of Alayor off the road to Son Bou.

The restored **Naveta d'es Tudons** is accessible 5km (3 miles) east of Ciudadela, just to the south of the road to Mahón. This is the best-preserved and most significant prehistoric collection of megalithic monuments on Menorca. Its *naveta* (a boat-shaped monument thought to be a dwelling or a burial chamber) is said to be among the oldest monuments constructed by humans in Europe. Archaeologists have found the remains of many bodies at this site, along

A megalithic stone monument at Trepucó.

with a collection of prehistoric artifacts, including pottery and decorative jewelry (now in museums). The site is more easily visited from Ciudadela (see below).

Ciudadela ★

At the western end of the island, the town of Ciudadela (Ciutadella de Menorca) has a typically Mediterranean air. The narrow streets of the Old City are lined with 17th- and 18th-century noble mansions and numerous churches. It was the capital until 1722, when the British chose Mahón instead because its harbor is more navigable. Subsequently, the British built the main island road to link the two cities.

Like Mahón, Ciudadela perches high above its harbor, which is smaller than Mahón's. The seat of Menorca's bishopric, Ciudadela pontificates while Mahón administrates. Known as Medina Minurka under the Muslims, Ciudadela retains Moorish traces despite the 1558 Turkish invasion and destruction of the city. An obelisk in memory of the city's futile defense against that invasion stands in **Plaça d'es Born (Plaza del Born),** the city's main square overlooking the port.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE From the airport, you must take a taxi to Ciudadela, as there is no bus link. The cost is approximately 45€ each way.

From Mahón, six **buses** go back and forth every day; a one-way fare costs 4.50€. Departures are from Plaça s'Esplanada in Mahón.

Driving from Ciudadella in the west to Mahón in the east, head east along C-721, which traverses the center of Menorca and is the best road on the island.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **tourist office,** located at Plaça Catedral 5 (✆ **97-138-26-93**), is open June to September daily 9am to 9pm; October to May, hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm and 5 to 7pm, and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

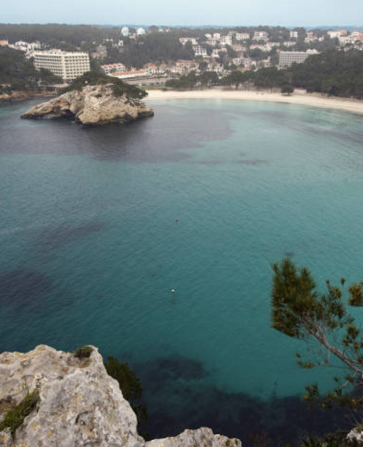
Buses depart from Plaça d'Artrutx for most coastal destinations, including the best beaches. **Cala Santandria,** 3km (1¾ miles) to the south, is known for its white sands. This is a sheltered beach near a creek; in its background are rock caves, which were inhabited in prehistoric times. The coves of **En Forcat, Blanes,** and **Brut** are near Ciudadela.

Cala de Santa Galdana, not reached by public transport, is the most stunning bay in the area, lying 23km (14 miles) south of Ciudadela. The tranquil bay is ringed with a beach of fine golden sand. Tall, bare cliffs rise in the background. The road to this beach, unlike so many others on Menorca, is a good one.

EXPLORING CIUDADELA

The center of Ciudadela is **Plaça d'es Born.** It was the center of life when the town was known to Jaume I. Back then Ciudadela was completely walled to protect against pirate incursions, which were a serious threat from the 13th century onwards. Development stopped in Ciudadela when the capital was transferred to Mahón in 1722. Many buildings now stand that might otherwise have been torn down to make way for progress.

Plaça d'es Born looks over the port from the north. The square was built around the **obelisk** that remembers the hopeless struggle of the town against the invading Turks who entered the city in 1558 and caused much destruction. On the west side of the square is the **Ayuntamiento (Town Hall).**



LEFT: **Cala de Santa Galdana from afar.** RIGHT: **The central Plaça d'es Born.**

To the southwest of the square stands **Església de San Francisco.** The 14th-century Gothic building has some excellent carved wood altars. A once-splendid palace, **Palacio de Torre-Saura,** also opens onto the square. Still owner occupied, it was constructed in the 1800s.

The fortresslike **cathedral,** Plaça Pío XII, was ordered built by the conquering Alfonso III on the site of the former mosque. The facade of the church, in the neoclassical style, was added in 1813. The church suffered heavy damage during the Spanish Civil War, but it has since been restored.

Ciudadela is at its liveliest at the **port,** with an array of shops, bars, and restaurants. Sailboats and yachts dock here in summer. **Carrer Quadrado,** lined with shops and arcades, is another street worth walking.

The Moorish influence lingers in a block of whitewashed houses in the **Voltes,** off the Plaça s'Esplanada. In Ciudadela, local people still meet at **Plaça d'Alfons III,** the square honoring their long-ago liberator.

WHERE TO EAT IN & AROUND CIUDADELA

Café Balear ★ SEAFOOD This cafe restaurant serves some of the best and freshest seafood on the island. Situated right on the water's edge, it offers excellent food prepared by the local personality, chef José Luis Ruesca. The *merluza* (hake) is always a worthy choice, as is the rice with fresh shrimp or lobster stew.

Passeig Pla de Sant Joan 15. www.cafe-balear.com. ☎ **97-138-00-05.** Reservations required. Main courses 16€–22€. AE, DC, MC, V. Summer Mon–Sat 1–4:30pm and 7pm–12:30am; off season Tues–Sun 1–4pm, Mon–Sat 7:30pm–midnight. Closed Nov.

Es Caliu Grill SPANISH About 2.5km (1½ miles) south of Ciudadela, along the main road between Cala Santandria and Cala Blanca, Es Caliu specializes in grilled meats, including lamb, veal, pork, rabbit, quail, and spit-roasted suckling pig. Above the bar hang hams and garlic braids, and off to the side are stacked wine barrels. The outdoor terrace is festooned with cascading flowers; indoors are two rustic dining areas, one with a fireplace.

Carretera Cap de Artruix s/n. ☎ **97-138-01-65.** Main courses 15€–28€. MC, V. May–Oct daily 1–4pm and 7pm–midnight; off season Fri 7–11:30pm, Sat–Sun 1–4pm and 7–11:30pm.

Tritón TAPAS Tritón is the best place for seafood tapas in the port, including octopus, stuffed squid, and *escupiñas* (Menorcan clams). This bar opens daily at 4am, to serve fishermen heading out to nearby fishing banks. It also serves night owls, who stop for a nightcap before tottering off to bed.

Marina 55. www.bartriton.com. ✆ **97-138-00-02.** Tapas 3.50€–27€; combined platters 7€–20€. MC, V. Easter–Oct daily 4am–2am; Nov–Easter 4am–1am.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Café El Molino, Camino de Maó 7 (✆ **97-138-00-00**), has attracted every drinker in town since it was established in 1905. Fishermen come in for early morning coffee, and locals and tourists both stop by for an evening drink. Earthy and brusque, it's an authentic slice of Menorca.

An alley in Es Mercadal.

WHERE TO STAY IN & AROUND CIUDADELA

Hesperia Patricia ★ Built in 1988, this three-story building is centrally located for business or vacation. It is Ciudadela's most luxurious hotel. Near the Plaça d'es Born, about a half-mile from the nearest beach (Playa de La Caleta), it has a polite staff well versed in the island's facilities and geography. Spacious guest rooms are carpeted and outfitted in pastels.

Passeig Sant Nicolau 90–92, 07760 Ciudadela, Menorca. www.hesperia-patricia.com. ✆ **97-138-55-11.** Fax 97-148-11-20. 44 units. 59€–169€ double; 130€–235€ junior suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking on street. Closed Nov–Feb. **Amenities:** Bar; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Rural Sant Ignasi ★★ 🎁 For tranquillity seekers, this property lies outside town and is surrounded by gardens and woodland. Once the private hacienda of a prestigious Menorcan family, it lies within an easy drive of all the beaches on the northern and southwestern coast of the island. The staff can also direct you to such activities as horseback riding, watersports, and cycling. The restored home has style and personality in its midsize bedrooms. Each room on the ground level has a private garden. Units on the second landing open onto terraces with views of the countryside. For romantics, there are rooms in the ancient loft of the house, with its sloping wooden ceilings.

Carretera Cala Morell s/n, Apartado 424, 07760 Ciudadela, Menorca. www.santignasi.com. ✆ **97-138-55-75.** Fax 97-148-03-37. 25 units. 145€–285€ double; 210€–415€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. Closed Oct–Mar. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; 2 outdoor freshwater pools; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Hotel Sol Menorca This hotel outside Ciudadela gives the impression of a large hacienda, complete with lacy iron balconies and louvered shutters. Surrounded by lawns and flowering shrubs, it has a private beach and a sweeping view of rocky islets. Many guests make their balconies an extension of their midsize rooms, reading, sitting, and talking within sight of the sea. Children 14 and under are not allowed at the hotel.

Playa Santo Tomás s/n, 07749 San Cristóbal (11km/6¾ miles southwest of Ciudadela), Menorca. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **97-137-00-50.** Fax 97-137-03-48. 188 units. 148€–364€ double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking 10€. Closed early Oct to Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; outdoor freshwater pool; room service; Wi-Fi (free, in lobby). *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Central & Southern Menorca

Topographically and climatically, this is the more tranquil part of the island. The beaches are more accessible, and the winds blow less—as a result, tourism has taken a firmer foothold here than in the north. Santo Tomás, Cala Galdana, Platges de Son Bou, Cala Bosch, and Punta Prima are some of the focal points for travelers.

Es Mercadal, a town of several thousand inhabitants at the foot of Monte Toro, is an ensemble of white houses with grace notes of color. Among its claims to local fame are two types of almond confectionery—*carquinyols* (small, hard cookies) and *amargos* (a kind of macaroon). The place to get both is **Villalonga Sucrer,** Carrer Nou 46, Es Mercadal (www.cassucrer.es; ✆ **97-115-41-44**), open Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 1:30pm and 5 to 8:30pm, and Sunday 11am to 2pm.

From Es Mercadal, you can take a road 4km (2½ miles) up to **Monte Toro,** the island's tallest mountain at 355m (1,165 ft.), crowned with a sanctuary that is a place of pilgrimage for Menorcans. The site includes a small church with an ornate gilded altar displaying the image (reportedly found nearby in 1290) of the Virgin Mare de Déu d'el Toro, the island's patron saint. The church is open daily from early morning to sunset; admission is free.

The winding road leads to a panoramic view of the island's rolling green countryside dotted with *fincas,* trim fields, and stands of trees. From this vantage point you can clearly see the contrast between the flatter southern part of the island and the hilly northern region.

Platges de Son Bou is a stunning beach scarred by two outsized hotels. Although still enchanting, the 1.6km-long (1-mile) narrow beach and clear turquoise waters are now often crowded, especially in July and August. At the eastern end of the beach just beyond the hotels are the ruins of a Paleo-Christian basilica, most probably dating from the 5th or 6th century. Visible in the cliffs beyond are cave dwellings, some of which appear quite prosperous, with painted facades and shades to keep out the noonday sun.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

Ca N'Olga ★ MENORCAN Occupying a typical white-stucco Menorcan house that's some 150 years old, this restaurant offers dining on a pretty outdoor patio or at a handful of indoor tables. The eclectic menu is likely to include quail with onion-and-sherry vinegar, *osso buco, cap roig* (scorpionfish), *cabrito* (baby goat), and mussels au gratin. Try the velvety smooth fig ice cream for dessert.

Pont Na Macarrana s/n, Es Mercadal. ✆ **97-137-54-59.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 18€–35€. AE, DC, MC, V. Mid-Mar and Nov Wed–Mon 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; Apr–May and Oct Wed–Sun 1:30–3:30pm and 8:30–11:30pm; June–Sept daily 1:30–3:30pm and 7:45–11:30pm.

Hotel Santo Tomás ★ Located on the beach, Santo Tomás offers the best quality and comfort on the island. Public areas are airy and spacious, and guest rooms are comfortable. Most units open onto a terrace that faces the sea.

Playa Santo Tomás, 07749 Es Migjorn Gran, Menorca. www.sethotels.com. ✆ **97-137-00-25.** Fax 97-137-02-04. 85 units. 120€–300€ double; 170€–375€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast and dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; 2 freshwater pools (1 heated indoor); room service; sauna; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

S'Engolidor ★ 🎁 MENORCAN In the village of Es Migjorn Gran (San Cristóbal), between Es Mercadal and Santo Tomás, this cozy restaurant is in a building that dates from 1740, with sections added throughout the years. The dining area consists of several small rooms, each with just a few tables. You can dine outdoors in one of the small patio areas; many overlook the owner's compact vegetable garden. The menu consists of Menorcan specialties, including *olaigua,* which is eggplant (aubergine) stuffed with fish, and a particularly succulent version of roasted lamb.

Carrer Major 3, Es Migjorn Gran. ✆ **97-137-01-93.** Reservations recommended Fri–Sat. Main courses 18€–30€. MC, V. Tues–Sun 8–11pm. Closed Nov–Apr.

Sol Gavilanes A large resort hotel, Sol Gavilanes is fully equipped with swimming pools, discos, restaurants, and bars. It's atop a steep slope overlooking one of the most perfect beaches in the Mediterranean. The beauty of Cala Galdana has been marred by construction, but you can enjoy the best end of its sandy, crescent-shaped beach and turquoise waters by staying here. Each of the sizable, functionally furnished units has a balcony.

Urbanización Cala Galdana s/n, 07750 Ferreries, Menorca. www.solmelia.com. ✆ **97-115-45-45.** Fax 97-115-45-46. 346 units. 51€–348€ double; 130€–389€ suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; babysitting; children's center; exercise room; 2 outdoor freshwater pools; room service; spa; limited watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Fornells & the Northern Coast

The road leading north from Es Mercadal to Fornells runs through some of the island's finer scenery. There are good dining choices, but few mass-tourism hotels. On the northern coast, the tiny town of Fornells snuggles around a bay filled with boats and windsurfers. Built around four defense fortifications, including the **Tower of Fornells** at the harbor mouth and the now-ruined **Castle of San Jorge,** Fornells today is a flourishing fishing village noted for its upscale restaurants featuring savory lobster *calderetas.*

🎁 Cave Dancing

Just .8km (½ mile) to the east in Cala'n Porter is a unique nightspot. Embedded in a series of caves within a sheer cliff face rising from the sea, **La Cova d'en Xoroi** (www.covadenxoroi.com; ✆ **97-137-72-36**) is a conglomeration of bars, terraces, intimate nooks and crannies, and a disco floor. As you walk down the entrance stairway, the magnificent setting opens before you. The dance floor overlooks the sea at the cliff's edge. Prehistoric vessels were found inside these caves that, according to legend, were once the refuge of a Moor called Xoroi, who had abducted a local maid and made his home here with her and their family. You can visit this unusual spot during the day as well, from 10:30am to 9pm. In the evening, from 11pm to 4am, La Cova d'en Xoroi transforms into a disco. Admission is 5€ to 25€, including your first drink.

The view from Monte Toro, outside Es Mercadal.

West of Fornells is **Platja Binimella,** a beautiful beach (unofficially nudist) easily accessible by car. Its long, curving, sandy cove is peacefully set against undulating hills. A snack bar is the sole concession to civilization.

It takes some effort to reach the splendid panorama from the promontory at **Cap de Cavalleria,** the northernmost tip of the island, marked by a lighthouse. At a bend in the road leading to Platja Binimella, a signpost indicates the turnoff to Cap de Cavalleria through a closed gate heading to a dirt road. The closed gate is typical on the roads leading to Menorca's undeveloped beaches. But all beaches in Spain are public and the custom is to open the gate, go through, then close it behind you so livestock will not escape. As you follow the long dirt road to Cap de Cavalleria, you come across several more gates and travel through countryside reminiscent of the Scottish highlands, with cultivated fields and scattered grand *fincas.* Park shortly before the lighthouse, then pick your way across the scrub and rocks for the views. The best one is from a circular tower in ruins to the right of the lighthouse. The vista encompasses the whole of Menorca—a symphony of dramatic cliffs and jewel-blue water.

WHERE TO EAT

Fornells is noted for its fine seafood restaurants specializing in Menorcan *calderetas,* or seafood stew.

Es Pla ★ SEAFOOD/MENORCAN Stylish, airy, and elegant in a way that reflects the seagoing life of the island, Es Pla has thrived here since the 1960s. Its wood-floored porch is only about 2m (6½ ft.) above the swell of the surf. Large and informal, it has a long stainless-steel bar area. Menu items include a roster of perfectly prepared fish, meat, and shellfish, but the acknowledged culinary winner—and the most frequently ordered dish—is paella with crayfish. Only the shellfish dishes are expensive.

Passeig des Pla s/n, Fornells. ✆ **97-137-66-55.** Reservations recommended July–Aug. Main courses 17€–45€. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 1–4pm and 7–10pm. Closed Jan–Mar.

S'Algaret SPANISH Adjacent to the *hostal* of the same name, S'Algaret is one of the few economical alternatives in Fornells. The restaurant is quiet and unpretentious. You can nibble on good-tasting tapas, sandwiches, a selection of tortillas, and a smattering of *platos combinados* (combination plates), the ingredients of which change daily.

Plaça S'Algaret 7, Fornells. www.hostal-salgaret.com. ✆ **97-137-66-66.** Tapas 3€–8€ per *ración* (serving); platters 14€–24€. AE, MC, V. Daily 8am–midnight.

CANTUR
POMA ITALIA

20

PLANNING YOUR TRIP TO SPAIN

Getting to Spain is relatively easy, especially for those who live in western Europe or on the East Coast of the United States. If all your documents are in order, you should clear Customs and Immigration smoothly. The staffs of entry ports into Spain often speak English, and they'll usually speed you on your way. In this chapter, you'll find everything you need to plan your trip, from tips on hotels to health care and emergency information.

GETTING THERE

By Plane

FROM NORTH AMERICA Flights from the U.S. East Coast to Spain take 6 to 7 hours. Spain's national carrier, **Iberia Airlines** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **800/772-4642**), has more routes into and within Spain than any other airline. It offers daily nonstop service to Madrid from New York, Chicago, Boston, and Miami. Also available are attractive rates on fly/drive packages within the Iberian Peninsula; they can substantially reduce the cost of both the air ticket and the car rental.

Iberia's main Spain-based competitor is **Air Europa** (www.aireuropa.com; ✆ **011-34-90-240-15-01**), which offers nonstop service from New York to Madrid, with continuing service to major cities within Spain. Fares are often lower than Iberia's.

American Airlines (www.aa.com; ✆ **800/433-7300**) offers daily nonstop service to Madrid from New York (JFK) and from its massive hub in Miami.

Delta (www.delta.com; ✆ **800/221-1212**) runs daily nonstop service from Atlanta (its worldwide hub) to both Madrid and Barcelona. Direct flights to Madrid depart 5 days a week from New York (JFK). Delta's Dream Vacation department offers independent fly/drive packages, land packages, and escorted bus tours.

Continental Airlines (www.continental.com; ✆ **800/231-0856**) offers daily nonstop flights, depending on the season, to Madrid from Newark.

US Airways (www.usairways.com; ✆ **800/622-1015**) offers daily nonstop service between Philadelphia and Madrid. The carrier also has connecting flights to Philadelphia from more than 50 cities throughout the United States, Canada, and the Bahamas.

United (www.united.com; ✆ **800/864-8331**) offers daily nonstop service between Washington-Dulles and Madrid operated by partner Aer Lingus.

FROM THE U.K. **British Airways** (www.britishairways.com; ✆ **0844/493-0787,** or 800/247-9297 in the U.S.) and **Iberia** (www.iberia.com; ✆ **0870/609-0500** in London) are the two major carriers flying between England

PREVIOUS PAGE: **The Fuente Dé *teleférico.***

and Spain. More than a dozen daily flights, on either British Airways or Iberia, depart from London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports. The Midlands is served by flights from Manchester and Birmingham, two major airports that can also be used by Scottish travelers flying to Spain. There are about seven flights a day from London to Madrid and back, and at least six to Barcelona (trip time: 2–2½ hr.). From either the Madrid airport or the Barcelona airport, you can tap into Iberia's domestic network—flying, for example, to Sevilla or the Costa del Sol. The best air deals on scheduled flights from England are those requiring a Saturday-night stopover.

British newspapers are filled with classified advertisements touting "slashed" fares to Spain. London's *Evening Standard* has a daily travel section, and the Sunday editions of most papers are filled with charter deals. A travel agent can advise you on the best values at the intended time of your departure.

Charter flights to specific destinations leave from most British regional airports (for example, to Málaga), bypassing the congestion at the Barcelona and Madrid airports. Figure on saving approximately 10% to 15% off regularly scheduled flight tickets. But check carefully into the restrictions and terms; read the fine print, especially in regard to cancellation penalties. One recommended company is **Trailfinders** (www.trailfinders.com; ✆ **0845/058-5858** in London), which operates charters.

In London, the many bucket shops around Victoria Station and Earl's Court offer cheap fares. Make sure the company you deal with is a member of IATA, ABTA, or ATOL. These umbrella organizations will help you if anything goes wrong.

FROM AUSTRALIA From Australia, a number of options are available for your flight to Spain. The most popular is **Qantas/British Airways** (www.qantas.com.au; ✆ **612/13-13-13**), which flies daily via Asia and London. Other popular and cheaper options are Qantas/Lufthansa via Asia and Frankfurt; Qantas/Air France via Asia and Paris; and Alitalia via Bangkok and Rome. The most direct option is offered by Singapore Airlines, with just one stop in Singapore. Alternatively, there are flights on Thai Airways via Bangkok and Rome, but the connections are not always good.

By Car

If you're touring the rest of Europe in a rented car, you might, for an added cost, be allowed to drop off your vehicle in a major city such as Madrid or Barcelona.

Highway approaches to Spain are across France on expressways. The most popular border crossing is near Biarritz, but there are 17 other border stations between Spain and France. If you plan to visit the north or west of Spain (Galicia), the Hendaye-Irún border is the most convenient frontier crossing. If you're going to Barcelona or Catalunya and along the Levante coast (Valencia), take the expressway in France to Toulouse, then the A-61 to Narbonne, and then the A-9 toward the border crossing at La Junquera. You can also take the RN-20, with a border station at Puigcerdà.

If you're driving from Britain, make sure you have a cross-Channel reservation, as traffic tends to be very heavy, especially in summer.

The major ferry crossings connect Dover and Folkestone with Dunkirk. Newhaven is connected with Dieppe, and the British city of Portsmouth with

Roscoff. Taking a car on the ferry from Dover to Calais on **P & O Ferries** (www.poferries.com; ✆ **0871/664-5645**) costs £25 to £80 and takes 1¼ hours. This cost includes the car and two passengers.

Eurostar tickets, for cross-channel train services between London and Paris or Brussels, are available through **Rail Europe** (www.raileurope.com or www.eurostar.com; ✆ **877/272-RAIL** [272-7245]). In London, make reservations for Eurostar at ✆ **0870/518-6186.** The tunnel also accommodates passenger cars, charter buses, taxis, and motorcycles, transporting them under the English Channel from Folkestone, England, to Calais, France. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, running every 15 minutes during peak travel times, and at least once an hour at night. Tickets may be purchased at the tollbooth at the tunnel's entrance. With "Eurotunnel," gone are the days of weather-related delays, seasickness, and advance ferry reservations.

Once you land, you'll have about a 15-hour drive to Spain.

If you plan to transport a rental car between England and France, check in advance with the rental company about license and insurance requirements and additional drop-off charges. And be aware that many car-rental companies, for insurance reasons, forbid transport of one of their vehicles over the water between England and France.

By Train

If you're already in Europe, you might want to go to Spain by train, especially if you have a Eurailpass. Even without a pass, you'll find that the cost of a train ticket is relatively moderate. Rail passengers who visit from Britain or France should make couchette and sleeper reservations as far in advance as possible, especially during the peak summer season.

Since Spain's rail tracks are of a wider gauge than those used for French trains (except for the TALGO and Trans-Europe-Express trains), you may have to change trains at the border unless you're on an express train or hotel train (see below). For long journeys on Spanish rails, seat and sleeper reservations are mandatory. For more information, visit www.renfe.es or call ✆ **91-631-38-00.**

The most comfortable and the fastest trains in Spain are the AVE, Alvia, and Alaris. However, you pay a supplement to ride on these fast trains. Both first- and second-class fares are sold on Spanish trains. Tickets can be purchased in the United States or Canada at the nearest office of Rail Europe or from any reputable travel agent. Confirmation of your reservation takes about a week. If you will be traveling primarily by train, the Spain Rail Pass from Rail Europe is usually an economical and practical option (see below).

If you want your car carried aboard the train, you must travel Auto-Expreso in Spain. This type of auto transport can be booked only through travel agents or rail offices once you arrive in Europe.

To go from London to Spain by rail, you'll need to transfer not only from the train but also from the rail terminus in Paris. In Paris it's worth the extra bucks to purchase a TALGO express or a "Puerta del Sol" express—that way, you can avoid having to change trains once again at the Spanish border. Trip time from London to Paris is about 6 hours, and from Paris to Madrid about 15 hours, which includes 2 hours spent in Paris just changing trains and stations. Many different rail passes are available in the United Kingdom for travel in Europe.

By Bus

Bus travel to Spain is possible but not popular—it's quite slow. (Service from London will take 24 hr. or more.) But coach services do operate regularly from major capitals of western Europe and, once they're in Spain, usually head for Madrid or Barcelona. The major bus line running from London to Spain is **Eurolines Limited,** 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU, U.K. (www.nationalexpress.com; ✆ **0871/781-8181**).

GETTING AROUND

By Plane

By European standards, domestic flights within Spain are relatively inexpensive, and considering the vast distances within the country, flying between distant points sometimes makes sense. For reservations on the national airline, Iberia, visit www.iberia.com or call ✆ **800/772-4642.**

If you plan to travel to a number of cities and regions, either the StarAlliance Europe AirPass or the Oneworld Visit Europe Pass can be a good deal. Sold only in conjunction with a transatlantic ticket and valid for most airports in Europe, they require that you choose up to four different cities in advance, in the order you'll visit them. Restrictions forbid flying immediately back to the city of departure, instead encouraging far-flung visits to widely scattered regions of the peninsula. Only one change within the preset itinerary is permitted once the ticket is issued. The dates and departure times of the actual flights, however, can be determined or changed without penalty once you arrive in Europe. The actual costs depend on what kind of ticket you are issued—consult the folks at your transatlantic carrier if you're interested in a multi-stopover ticket and see what the best deal is at the time of your visit. The ticket is valid for up to 60 days after your initial transatlantic arrival in Europe.

By Car

A car offers the greatest flexibility while you're touring, even if you're just doing day trips from Madrid. But don't plan to drive in Madrid, Barcelona, or Sevilla for city sightseeing; they are too congested. Theoretically, rush hour is Monday to Saturday from 8 to 10am, 1 to 2pm, and 4 to 6pm. In reality, though, it's all the time.

RENTALS Many of North America's biggest car-rental companies, including Avis, Budget, and Hertz, maintain offices throughout Spain. Although several Spanish car-rental companies exist, we've received lots of letters from readers of previous editions telling us they've had hard times resolving billing irregularities and insurance claims, so you might want to stick with the U.S.-based rental firms.

Note that tax on car rentals is a whopping 15%, so don't forget to factor that into your travel budget. Usually, prepaid rates do not include taxes, which will be collected at the rental kiosk itself. Be sure to ask explicitly what's included when you're quoted a rate.

Avis (www.avis.com; ✆ **800/331-1084**) maintains about 100 branches throughout Spain, including about a dozen in Madrid, eight in Barcelona, and a half dozen in Sevilla. If you reserve and pay for your rental by telephone at least 2 weeks before your departure from North America, you'll qualify for the company's best rate, with unlimited kilometers included. You can usually get competitive rates from **Hertz** (www.hertz.com; ✆ **800/654-3001**) and **Budget** (www.budget.com; ✆ **800/472-3325**); it always pays to comparison shop. Budget doesn't have a drop-off charge if you pick up a car in one Spanish city and return it to another. All three companies require that drivers be at least 21 years of age and, in some cases, not older than 72. To be able to rent a car, you must have a passport and a valid driver's license; you must also have a valid credit card or a prepaid voucher. An international driver's license is not essential, but you might want to present it if you have one; it's available from any North American office of the American Automobile Association (AAA).

Two other agencies of note include **Kemwel Drive Europe** (www.kemwel.com; ✆ **877/820-0668**) and **Auto Europe** (www.autoeurope.com; ✆ **888/223-5555**).

Internet resources can make comparison shopping easier. **Expedia** (www.expedia.com) and **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com) help you compare prices and locate car-rental bargains from various companies nationwide. They will even make your reservation for you once you've found the best deal.

DRIVING RULES Spaniards drive on the right-hand side of the road. Drivers should pass on the left; local drivers sound their horns when passing another car and flash their lights at you if you're driving slowly (slowly for high-speed Spain) in the left lane. Autos coming from the right have the right of way.

Spain's express highways are known as *autopistas,* which charge a toll, and *autovías,* which don't. To exit in Spain, follow the salida (exit) sign, except in Catalunya, where the exit sign says sortida. On most express highways, the speed limit is 120kmph (75 mph). On other roads, speed limits range from 90kmph to 100kmph (56–62 mph). You will see many drivers far exceeding these limits.

The most accidents in Spain are recorded along the notorious Costa del Sol highway, Carretera de Cádiz.

If you must drive through a Spanish city, try to avoid morning and evening rush hours. Never park your car facing oncoming traffic, which is against the law. If you are fined by the Guardia Civil de Tráfico (highway patrol), you must pay on the spot. Penalties for drinking and driving are very stiff.

BREAKDOWNS If you're driving a Spanish-made vehicle that needs parts, you'll probably be able to find them. But if you are driving a foreign-made vehicle, you may be stranded. Have the car checked before setting out on a long trek through Spain. On a major motorway you'll find strategically placed emergency phone boxes. On secondary roads, call for help by asking the operator to locate the nearest Guardia Civil, which will put you in touch with a garage that can tow you to a repair shop.

The Spanish affiliate of AAA, **Real Automóvil Club de España** (**RACE;** www.race.es; ✆ **90-240-45-45**), can provide limited assistance in the event of a breakdown.

GASOLINE (PETROL) Service stations abound on the major arteries of Spain and in such big cities as Madrid and Barcelona. They are open 24 hours a day. On secondary roads, most stations open at 7am daily, closing at 11pm or midnight, so plan accordingly. In today's Spain, stations are generally self-service. Prices are the same as at a full-service station. All gas is unleaded—*gasolina sin plomo.* Many vehicles run on clean diesel fuel called Gasoleo A or on more expensive Biodiesel. The price of fuel in Spain, especially in these uncertain times, varies from week to week, but always expect it to be expensive, far more so than in the States. ***Tip:*** To check prices and available stations, visit the Ministry of Energy website at www.minetur.gob.es. Most stations will accept credit cards.

MAPS For one of the best overviews of the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), get Michelin map no. 990 (folded version) or map no. 460 (spiral-bound version). For more detailed looks at Spain, Michelin has a series of six maps (nos. 441–446) showing specific regions, complete with many minor roads.

For extensive touring, purchase *Mapas de Carreteras—España y Portugal,* published by Almax Editores and available at most leading bookstores in Spain. This cartographic compendium of Spain provides an overview of the country and includes road and street maps of some of its major cities.

The **American Automobile Association** (www.aaa.com) publishes a regional map of Spain that's available free to members at most AAA offices in the United States. As mentioned above, the AAA is associated with the **Real Automóvil Club de España** (www.race.es; ✆ **90-240-45-45**). This organization can supply helpful information about road conditions in Spain, including tourist and travel advice. It will also provide limited road service, in an emergency, if your car breaks down.

Google Maps (http://maps.google.com) are extremely accurate in metropolitan areas, but the database is not always up-to-date on closures of rural roads.

By Train

Spain is crisscrossed with a comprehensive network of rail lines. Hundreds of trains depart every day for points around the country, including the fast TALGO and the newer, faster AVE and Altria trains, which have reduced rail time between Madrid and Sevilla and Madrid and Barcelona to only 2½ hours.

The most economical way to travel in Spain is on **Spanish State Railways (RENFE),** the national railway of Spain. Most main long-distance connections are served with night express trains having first- and second-class seats as well as beds and bunks. There are also comfortable high-speed daytime trains. You pay a general fare for these trains; bunks, beds, and certain superior-quality trains cost extra. Nevertheless, the Spanish railway is one of the most economical in Europe; in most cases, this is the best way to go. The RENFE website has possibly the world's easiest-to-use online schedule.

SPANISH RAIL PASSES RENFE, the national railway of Spain, offers several discounted rail passes. You must buy these passes in the United States prior to your departure. For more information, consult a travel agent or **Rail Europe** (www.raileurope.com; ✆ **877/272-RAIL** [272-7245]).

The **Eurail Spain Pass** entitles you to unlimited rail travel in Spain. It is available for 3 to 10 days of travel within 2 months in either first or second class. For 3 days within 2 months, the cost is 229€ in first class or 185€ in second class; for 10 days within 2 months, the charge is 468€ in first class or 375€ in second class. Children 4 to 11 pay half fare on any of these discount passes.

The **Eurail Select Pass** allows 5 to 15 days of unlimited train travel in a 2-month period in three or more neighboring countries. For example, a

Select Pass for Spain, France, and Portugal begins at 376€ for 5 days, first-class only.

EURAILPASS The Eurailpass permits unlimited first-class rail travel in any country in western Europe except the British Isles (good in Ireland). Passes are available for purchase online (www.eurail.com) and at various offices/agents around the world. Travel agents and railway agents in such cities as New York, Montreal, and Los Angeles sell Eurailpasses. You can purchase them at the North American offices of CIT Travel Service, the French National Railroads, the German Federal Railroads, and the Swiss Federal Railways. It is strongly recommended that you purchase passes before you leave home as not all passes are available in Europe; also, passes purchased in Europe will cost about 20% more.

The **Eurail Global Pass** allows you unlimited travel in 21 Eurail-affiliated countries. You can travel on any of the days within the validity period, which is available for 15 days, 21 days, 1 month, 2 months, 3 months, and some other possibilities as well. Prices for first-class adult travel start at 593€ for 15 days and range up to 1,641€ for 3 months. Children 4 to 11 pay half fare; those 3 and under travel for free.

A **Eurail Global Pass Saver,** also valid for first-class travel in 21 countries, offers a 15% discount for two or more people traveling together.

The **Eurail Select Pass** offers unlimited travel on the national rail networks of any three, four, or five bordering countries out of the 22 Eurail nations linked by train or ship. Two or more passengers can travel together for big discounts, getting 5, 6, 8, 10, or 15 days of rail travel within any 2-month period on the national rail networks of any three, four, or five adjoining Eurail countries linked by train or ship. **Eurail Select Pass Saver** offers discounts for two or more people traveling together, first-class travel within the same guidelines as Eurail Selectpass.

WHERE TO BUY RAIL PASSES Travel agents in all towns and railway agents in major North American cities sell all these tickets, but the biggest supplier is **Rail Europe** (www.raileurope.com; ✆ **877/272-RAIL** [272-7245]), which can also give you informational brochures and counsel you on which passes work best for your circumstances.

Many different rail passes are available in the United Kingdom for travel in Britain and continental Europe. Stop in at the **International Rail Centre,** Victoria Station, London SWIV 1JY (✆ **0870/5848-848** in the U.K.). Some of the most popular passes, including Inter-Rail and Euro Youth, are offered only to travelers ages 25 and under; these allow unlimited second-class travel through most European countries.

By Bus

Bus service in Spain is extensive, low priced, and comfortable enough for short distances. Outside of major cities, you'll rarely encounter a bus terminal in Spain. The station might be a cafe, a bar, the street in front of a hotel, or simply a spot at an intersection.

A bus may be the cheapest mode of transportation, but it's not really the best option for distances of more than 160km (100 miles). On long hauls, buses are often uncomfortable. Another major drawback might be a lack of toilet facilities, although rest stops are frequent. A bus is best for 1-day excursions outside a major tourist center such as Madrid. In the rural areas of the country, bus networks are more extensive than the railway system; they go virtually everywhere, connecting every village. In general, a bus ride between two major cities in Spain, such as from Córdoba to Sevilla or Madrid to Barcelona, is about two-thirds the price of a train ride and a few hours faster. (This doesn't include high-speed AVE trains.) ***Tip:*** Almost every bus schedule in Spain is available on the **Movelia** website (www.movelia.es), which also provides a means for purchasing tickets through the Internet if you have access to a printer.

TIPS ON ACCOMMODATIONS

From castles converted into hotels to modern high-rise resorts overlooking the Mediterranean, Spain has some of the most varied hotel accommodations in the world—with equally varied price ranges. Accommodations are broadly classified as follows:

ONE- TO FIVE-STAR HOTELS The Spanish government rates hotels by according them stars. A five-star hotel is truly deluxe, with deluxe prices; a one-star hotel consists of the most modest accommodations officially recognized as a hotel by the government. A four-star hotel offers first-class lodging; a three-star hotel is moderately priced; and a one- or two-star hotel is inexpensively priced. The government grants stars based on such amenities as elevators, private bathrooms, and air-conditioning. If a hotel is classified as a *residencia,* it means that it serves breakfast (usually) but no other meals. Unfortunately, government ratings are not a reliable standard of quality, as such amenities as meeting rooms and lobby size play a large role in gaining stars.

HOSTALES Not to be confused with a hostel for students, a *hostal* is a modest hotel without services, where you can save money by carrying your own bags and the like. You'll know it's a *hostal* if a small s follows the capital letter h on the blue plaque by the door. *Hostales* with three stars are about the equivalent of hotels with two stars.

PENSIONS These boarding houses are among the least expensive accommodations, but you're required to take either full board (three meals) or half-board, which is breakfast plus lunch or dinner.

CASAS HUESPEDES & FONDAS These are the cheapest places in Spain and can be recognized by the light-blue plaques at the door displaying ch and f, respectively. They are invariably basic but respectable establishments.

YOUTH HOSTELS Spain has about 140 *albergues de juventud* (youth hostels). In theory, travelers age 25 or under have the first chance at securing a bed for the night, but these places are certainly not limited to young people. Some of them are equipped for persons with disabilities. Most hostels impose an 11pm curfew. For information, contact **Red Española de Alberques Juveniles,** Castello 24, 28001 Madrid (www.reaj.com; ✆ **91-522-70-07**).

PARADORES The Spanish government runs a series of unique state-owned inns called *paradores,* which now blanket the country. Castles, monasteries, palaces, and other grand buildings have been taken over and converted into hotels. Several newer properties were simply built from scratch to look monumental. Today there are 100 *paradores* in all, and they're documented in a booklet called *Visiting the Paradores,* available at Spanish tourist offices.

At great expense, modern bathrooms, steam heat, and the like have been added to these buildings, yet classic Spanish architecture, where it existed, has been retained. Establishments are often furnished with antiques (or at least good reproductions) and decorative objects typical of the country.

Meals are also served in these government-owned inns. Usually, typical dishes of the region are featured. *Paradores* are likely to be overcrowded in the summer months, so advance reservations, arranged through any travel agent, are wise.

The government also operates ***albergues:*** These are comparable to motels, lining the road in usually hotel-scarce areas for the convenience of passing motorists. A client is not allowed to stay in an *albergue* for more than 48 hours, and the management doesn't accept reservations.

In addition, the government runs ***refugios*** (refuges), mostly in remote areas, attracting hunters, fishermen, and mountain climbers. Another state-sponsored establishment is the ***hostería,*** or specialty restaurant, such as the one at Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid (p. 178). *Hosterías* don't offer rooms; they serve regional dishes at reasonable prices.

The central office for *paradores* is **Paradores de España,** Requeña 3, 28013 Madrid (www.parador.es; ✆ **90-254-79-79**). The U.S. representative is **Marketing Ahead,** 381 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016 (www.marketingahead.com; ✆ **800/223-1356** or 212/686-9213). Travel agents can also arrange reservations.

Renting a House or an Apartment

If you rent a home or an apartment, you can save money on accommodations and dining and still take daily trips to see the surrounding area.

Apartments in Spain generally fall into two different categories: hotel *apartamentos* and *residencia apartamentos.* The hotel apartments have full facilities, with chamber service, equipped kitchenettes, and often restaurants and bars. The *residencia* apartments, also called *apartamentos turísticos,* are fully furnished with kitchenettes but lack the facilities of the hotel complexes. They are cheaper, however.

ILC (International Lodging Corporation; www.ilcweb.com; ✆ **888/SPAIN-44** [772-4644] or 212/228-5900) rents privately owned apartments, houses, and villas for a week or more. It also offers access to suites in well-known hotels for stays of a week or longer, sometimes at bargain rates. Rental units, regardless of their size, usually contain a kitchen. The company's listings cover accommodations in Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, Granada, and Mallorca.

[Fast FACTS] SPAIN

American Express The American Express number to call in Spain is ✆ **90-210-09-56.** A staff member will direct you to the nearest location to deal with your Amex needs.

Area Codes Dial **011** and then the country code for Spain **(34).** Drop the zero before dialing the city area code.

Business Hours Banks are open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 2pm and Saturday 9:30am to 1pm. Most other offices are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5 or 5:30pm; the longtime practice of early closings in summer seems to be dying out. In restaurants, lunch is usually 1 to 4pm and dinner 9 to 11:30pm or midnight. (Few Spaniards arrive before 10pm.) There are no set rules for the opening of bars and taverns; many open at 8am, others at noon. Most stay open until 1:30am or later. Major stores are open Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 8pm; smaller establishments, however, often take a siesta, doing business 9:30am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 8pm. Hours can vary from store to store.

Car Rental See "Getting Around," p. 750.

Cellphones See "Mobile Phones," below.

Crime See "Safety," p. 762.

Customs You can bring into Spain most personal effects and the following items duty-free: one portable typewriter, and one video camera or two still cameras with 10 rolls of film each; one portable radio, one tape recorder, and one laptop per person, provided they show signs of use; 400 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco; and 2 liters of wine or 1 liter of liquor per person ages 18 and over. For sports equipment you are allowed fishing gear, one bicycle, skis, tennis or squash racquets, and golf clubs.

Disabled Travelers Because of Spain's many hills and endless flights of stairs, visitors with disabilities may have difficulty getting around the country, but conditions are slowly improving. Newer hotels are more sensitive to the needs of those with disabilities, and the more expensive restaurants, in general, are wheelchair accessible. However, because most places have limited, if any, facilities for people with disabilities, you might consider taking an organized tour specifically designed to accommodate travelers with disabilities.

Organizations that offer a vast range of resources and assistance to travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab** (www.mossresourcenet.org; ✆ **800/CALL-MOSS** [225-5667]); the **American Foundation for the Blind** (**AFB;** www.afb.org; ✆ **800/232-5463**); and **SATH** (Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality; www.sath.org; ✆ **212/447-7284**). **AirAmbulanceCard.com** (✆ **877/424-7633**) is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

Access-Able Travel Source (www.access-able.com) offers a comprehensive database on travel agents from around the world with experience in accessible travel; destination-specific access information; and links to such resources as service animals, equipment rentals, and access guides.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (www.flyingwheelstravel.com; ✆ **877/451-5006** or 507/451-5005) and **Accessible Journeys** (www.disabilitytravel.com; ✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339).

Flying with Disability (www.flying-with-disability.org) is a comprehensive information source on airplane travel.

Also check out the quarterly magazine ***Emerging Horizons*** (www.emerginghorizons.com), available by subscription.

The "Accessible Travel" link at **Mobility-Advisor.com** (www.mobility-advisor.com) offers a variety of travel resources to persons with disabilities.

British travelers should contact **Tourism for All** (www.tourismforall.org.uk; ✆ **0845/124-9971** in the U.K. only) to access a wide range of travel information and resources for seniors and those with disabilities.

For more about organizations that offer resources to travelers with disabilities, go to Frommers.com.

Doctors All hotel front desks keep a list of doctors available in their area; most of them are fluent in English. For more detailed information, see "Health," below.

Drinking Laws The legal drinking age is 18. Bars, taverns, and cafeterias usually open at 8am, and many serve alcohol to 1:30am or later. Generally, you can purchase alcoholic beverages at almost any market.

Driving Rules See "Getting Around," p. 750.

Drugstores To find an open *farmacia* (pharmacy) outside normal business hours, check the list of stores posted on the door of any drugstore. The law requires drugstores to operate on a rotating system of hours so that there's always a drugstore open somewhere, even Sunday at midnight.

Electricity The U.S. uses 110-volt electricity, Spain 220-volt. Most low-voltage electronics, such as laptops, iPods, and cellphone chargers, will do fine with 220-volt. It's still smart to check with the manufacturer to determine how your appliance will handle a voltage switch. If it can't, a voltage converter can be used. Small adapters change a plug from a U.S. flat prong to a Spanish round prong so that you can fit it into a local socket, but they don't work as electrical converters. Adapters are sold at most *ferreterías* (hardware stores) in Spain, but converters are hard to come by. It's better to purchase one before flying off to Spain.

Embassies & Consulates If you lose your passport, fall seriously ill, get into legal trouble, or have some other serious problem, your embassy or consulate can help. These are the Madrid addresses and hours:

Offices for the **Australian, British, and Canadian** embassies are in the Espacio, Paseo de la Castellanna 259D (Metro: Begoña).

The **Australian Embassy** (www.spain.embassy.gov.au; ✆ **91-353-66-00**) is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm.

The **British Embassy** (http://ukinspain.fco.gov.uk/en; ✆ **91-714-63-00**) is open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5pm.

The **Canadian Embassy** (www.canadainternational.gc.ca/spain-espagne/index.aspx; ✆ **91-382-84-00**) is open Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 1pm and 2 to 5:30pm, Friday 8:30am to 2:30pm.

The **Republic of Ireland** has an embassy at Paseo Castellana 46 (http://ireland.visahq.com/embassy/spain; Metro: Serrano; ✆ **91-436-40-93**); it's open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm.

Citizens of **New Zealand** have an embassy at Calle del Pinar 7 (www.nzembassy.com/spain; ✆ **91-523-02-26**; Metro: Gregorio Marañón); it's open Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm and 3 to 5:30pm.

The **United States Embassy,** Calle de Serrano 75 (http://madrid.usembassy.gov; ✆ **91-587-22-00;** Metro: Núñez de Balboa), is open Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm.

Emergencies The national emergency number for Spain is ✆ **112.** For other emergency numbers call: ✆ **091** for the national police, ✆ **092** for the local police, ✆ **080** to report a fire, or ✆ **061** for an ambulance.

Family Travel To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, look for the ☺ icon throughout this guide.

Health Spain should not pose any major health hazards. The rich cuisine—garlic, olive oil, and wine—may give some travelers mild diarrhea, so take along antidiarrheal medicine, and moderate your eating habits. Tap is generally safe to drink but many travelers prefer bottled or mineral water. (Do not drink the water in mountain streams, regardless of how clear and pure it looks.) Fish and shellfish from the Mediterranean should only be eaten cooked; sushi and sashimi from Atlantic fish are safe to be eaten raw.

If you are traveling around Spain (particularly southern Spain) over the summer, limit your exposure to the sun, especially during the first few days of your trip and, thereafter, from 11am to 2pm. Use a sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF) and apply it liberally. Remember that children need more protection than adults do.

Spanish medical facilities are among the best in the world. If a medical emergency arises, your hotel staff can usually put you in touch with a reliable doctor. If not, contact the American embassy or a consulate; each one maintains a list of English-speaking doctors. Medical and hospital services aren't free, so be sure that you have appropriate insurance coverage before you travel.

We list **hospital** and **emergency numbers** in the "Fast Facts" sections for Madrid, Valencia, Alicante, and Barcelona; also see above, under "Emergencies."

Insurance For information on traveler's insurance, trip cancellation insurance, and medical insurance while traveling, please visit www.frommers.com/tips.

Internet & Wi-Fi More and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) "hotspots," pronounced "wee-fee" in Spanish. Mac owners have their own networking technology: Apple AirPort. **T-Mobile Hotspot** (www.t-mobile.com/hotspot or www.t-mobile.co.uk) offers wireless connections at coffee shops nationwide. **Boingo** (www.boingo.com) and **ATT** (www.business.att.com) have set up networks in airports and high-class hotel lobbies. iPass providers (www.ipass.com) also give you access to a few hundred wireless hotel lobby setups. To locate other hotspots that provide **free wireless networks,** go to **www.jiwire.com**.

Most business-class hotels offer Wi-Fi, but be sure to inquire about fees before using a hotel business center as charge can be exorbitant.

To find cybercafes, check **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**. Cybercafes are found in all large cities in Spain, especially Madrid and Barcelona, but they do not tend to cluster in any particular neighborhoods. In addition to formal cybercafes, most **youth hostels** and **public libraries** have Internet access.

Language The official language in Spain is Castilian **Spanish** (or Castellano). Although Spanish is spoken in every province of Spain, local tongues reasserted themselves with the restoration of democracy in 1975. After years of being outlawed during the Franco dictatorship, **Catalán** has returned to Barcelona and Catalunya, even appearing on street signs; this language and its derivatives are also spoken in the Valencia area and in the Balearic Islands, including Mallorca (even though natives there will tell you they speak Majorquín). The **Basque language** is widely spoken in the Basque region (the northeast, near France). Likewise, the **Galego language,** which sounds and looks very much like Portuguese, has enjoyed a renaissance in Galicia (the northwest). Of course, English is spoken in most hotels, restaurants, and shops.

Legal Aid In case of trouble with the authorities, contact your local embassy or consulate, which will recommend an English-speaking lawyer in your area. You will, of course, be charged a typical attorney's fee for representation.

LGBT Travelers In 1978, Spain legalized homosexuality among consenting adults. In April 1995, the parliament of Spain banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. And in 2005, gay marriage was legalized across Spain. Madrid and Barcelona are the major centers of gay life in Spain. The most popular resorts for gay travelers are Sitges (south of Barcelona), Torremolinos, and Ibiza.

Lost & Found Be sure to tell all your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss.

Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two.

To report a lost credit card, contact the following toll-free in Spain: American Express at ✆ **91-572-03-03;** Diners Club at ✆ **91-547-40-00;** MasterCard at ✆ **90-097-12-31;** or Visa at ✆ **90-099-11-24.**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend, when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (www.westernunion.com; ✆ **800/325-6000**).

Mail Airmail letters to the United States and Canada cost .85€ up to 20 grams, and letters to Britain or other E.U. countries cost .70€ up to 20 grams. Letters within Spain cost .36€. Postcards have the same rates as letters. Allow about 8 days for delivery to North America, generally less to the United Kingdom; in some cases, letters take 2 weeks to reach North America. Rates change frequently, so check at your local hotel before mailing anything. As for surface mail to North America, forget it. Chances are you'll be home long before your letter arrives.

Medical Requirements Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (particularly cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into Spain.

Mobile Phones You'll likely not be able to use a North American cellphone in Spain unless it's GSM/GPRS compatible and unless it operates with a SIM card. Virtually all cellphones in Spain operate with this system, as do AT&T and T-Mobile cellphones from North America. Most mobile phones from the U.K. are compatible.

Even if your phone is compatible with the system that operates in Spain, you'll probably need to have it unlocked, which means taking it to one of the small shops in Spain that offer this service (look for a se libran móviles sign; expect to pay 20€). Roaming charges for U.S.-based phones, even after you successfully convert them, are more expensive than using a Spanish cellphone plan.

Many travelers opt to simply buy a prepaid cellphone on location. **Vodafone** (www.vodafone.com), **Movistar** (aka Telefónica; www.movistar.com), **Orange** (www.orange.es), and **Yoigo** (www.yoigo.com) are the four largest and most reliable mobile phone service providers in Spain. Movistar is the oldest and most established.

You can buy a mobile phone in Spain through either the providers' specific dealer networks, or at independent electronics stores or department stores like El Corte Inglés. Generally, the prices for new mobile phones in Spain start at 25€ for the cheapest models.

In Spain, whoever makes the cellphone call pays the charges, whether it's to or from either a landline or mobile phone. (Unlike what generally happens in the U.S., the receiving phone is not charged.) Whoever makes the call pays for the call connection and for the usage, which is charged per second. Also, most rates don't include IVA (VAT tax), which is charged at 16%.

You can recharge your prepaid phone with additional *saldo* (credit) at grocery stores, tobacco shops, phone stores, bank machines, and even with online banking.

Money & Costs If there is one thing old Spaniards wax nostalgic over, it's not the police state they experienced under the dictatorship of Franco, but the prices paid back then. The **euro** became the official currency of Spain on January 1, 1999 (for details on the euro, check out www.europa.eu), but how they miss the days when you could go into a restaurant and order a meal with wine for the equivalent of 50¢.

Spain is no longer a budget destination. In such major cities as Barcelona or Madrid, you can often find hotels charging the same prices as in London or Paris. Once you move beyond Spain's tourist meccas into regional towns, provincial capitals, and especially the countryside, the prices drop considerably. For example, it's possible to enjoy a 6-week vacation in rural Spain for about the same price that 10 days to 2 weeks could cost in Madrid.

Taken as a whole, though, Spain remains slightly below the cost-of-living index of such countries as England, Germany, Italy, and France. Unfortunately, there is a very unfavorable exchange rate in Spain when you pay in U.S. dollars, though at press time the dollar had strengthened somewhat in recent months.

THE VALUE OF THE EURO VS. OTHER POPULAR CURRENCIES

Euro (€)	US$	UK£	C$	A$	NZ$
1€	$1.34	£0.85	C$1.34	A$1.25	NZ$1.61

Frommer's lists exact prices in the local currency. The currency conversions quoted above were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency exchange website (such as **www.oanda.com/currency/converter**) to check up-to-the-minute rates.

Prices in Spain are generally high, but you get good value for your money. Hotels are usually clean and comfortable, and restaurants generally offer good cuisine and ample portions made with quality ingredients. Trains are fast and on time, and most service personnel treat you with respect.

In Spain, many prices for children—generally defined as ages 6 to 17—are lower than for adults. Fees for children 5 and under are generally waived. Admission prices for seniors (over 60, 62, or 65, depending on venue) are the same as for children.

It's always advisable to bring money in a variety of forms on a vacation: a mix of cash, credit cards, and traveler's checks. You should also exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM.

ATMs often offer the best exchange rates. Avoid exchanging money at commercial exchange bureaus and hotels, which generally have the highest transaction fees.

Beware of hidden credit card fees while traveling. Check with your credit or debit card issuer to see what fees, if any, will be charged for overseas transactions. Recent reform

WHAT THINGS COST IN MADRID

Taxi from the airport to downtown Madrid	30.00€
Double room, moderate	150.00€–180.00€
Double room, inexpensive	90.00€
Three-course dinner for one, without wine, moderate	18.00€–28.00€
Bottle of beer	3.50€
Cup of coffee	1.50€
Admission to most museums	3.00€–8.00€

Major Change in Credit Cards

Chip and PIN represent a change in the way that credit and debit cards are used. The program is designed to cut down on the fraudulent use of credit cards. More and more banks are issuing customers Chip and PIN versions of their debit or credit cards. In the future, more and more vendors will be asking for a four-digit personal identification or PIN, which will be entered into a keypad near the cash register. In some cases, a waiter will bring a hand-held model to your table to verify your credit card.

In the changeover in technology, some retailers have falsely concluded that they can no longer take swipe cards, or can't take signature cards that don't have PINs anymore.

For the time being both the new and old cards are used in shops, hotels, and restaurants regardless of whether they have the old credit and debit card machines or the new Chip and PIN machines installed. Expect a lot of confusion.

In the interim, between traditional swipe credit cards and those with an embedded computer chip, here's what you can do to protect yourself:

- Get a four-digit PIN from your credit card's issuing bank before leaving home, or call the number on the back of each card and ask for a four-digit PIN.
- Keep an eye out for the right logo displayed in a retailer's window. You want Visa or MasterCard, not Maestro, Visa Electron, or Carte Bleue.
- Know that your Amex card will work where an Amex logo is displayed, but the card is not as widely accepted as Visa and MasterCard.
- As a last resort, make sure you have enough cash to cover your purchase.

legislation in the U.S., for example, has curbed some exploitative lending practices. But many banks have responded by increasing fees in other areas, including fees for customers who use credit and debit cards while out of the country—even if those charges were made in U.S. dollars. Fees can amount to 3% or more of the purchase price. Check with your bank before departing to avoid any surprise charges on your statement.

For help with currency conversions, tip calculations, and more, download Frommer's convenient Travel Tools app for your mobile device. Go to www.frommers.com/go/mobile and tap the Travel Tools icon.

Newspapers & Magazines All cities and towns, of course, have Spanish-language newspapers and magazines. However, in the tourist areas of big cities, many kiosks sell editions of the *International Herald Tribune* along with *Newsweek* and *Time.*

Packing For helpful information on packing for your trip, download our convenient Travel Tools. Go to www.frommers.com/go/mobile and tap the Travel Tools icon.

Passports See www.frommers.com/tips for information on how to obtain a passport or contact the following offices:

- **Australia** **Australian Passport Information Service** (www.passports.gov.au; ✆ **131-232**).
- **Canada** **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (www.ppt.gc.ca; ✆ **800/567-6868**).
- **Ireland** **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie; ✆ **01/671-1633**).

- **New Zealand** **Passports Office,** Department of Internal Affairs, 47 Boulcott St., Wellington, 6011 (www.passports.govt.nz; ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100).
- **United Kingdom** Visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency or contact the **Identity and Passport Service (IPS),** 89 Eccleston Sq., London, SW1V 1PN (www.ips.gov.uk; ✆ **0300/222-0000**).
- **United States** To find your regional passport office, check the U.S. Department of State website (http://travel.state.gov/passport) or call the **National Passport Information Center** (✆ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

Police See "Emergencies," p. 757.

Safety Like the U.S. and the U.K., Spain has experienced both domestic and foreign terrorist attacks. The country has not been targeted by jihadists since the 2004 train bombing by Al Qaeda, and the Basque nationalists have foresworn violence. If anything, Spain is safer than ever. Still, it is worth reading the U.S. State Department's Worldwide Caution public announcements available at http://travel.state.gov. Take them with a grain of salt, as the same conditions that prompt a travel advisory are everyday realities in most American cities and towns.

Spain has moderate crime rates (more like Canada than the U.S.), and the vast majority of tourists have trouble-free visits to Spain each year. That said, muggings and robberies do occur, so be on your guard around museums, monuments, restaurants, hotels, beach resorts, trains, train stations, airports, subways, and ATMs. Stay out of dark alleys and don't go off with strangers. Travelers should exercise caution by carrying limited cash and credit cards. Leave extra cash, credit cards, passports, and personal documents in a safe location.

Thieves often work in teams or pairs, with one person distracting a victim while an accomplice robs him or her. For example, a stranger might wave a map in your face and ask for directions or "inadvertently" spill something on you. While your attention is diverted, the accomplice makes off with the valuables. Pickpockets often work crowded areas like flea markets or subway trains, where you can be especially vulnerable if your hands are occupied with luggage.

Small items like luggage, cameras, or briefcases left visible in parked cars are an invitation to thieves. While driving, you could also encounter a "Good Samaritan" scam. A passing car will indicate there is a mechanical problem. If the driver stops to check the vehicle, accomplices steal from the car while the driver is looking elsewhere. Drivers should be cautious about accepting help from anyone other than a uniformed Spanish police officer or Civil Guard.

The loss or theft abroad of a passport should be reported immediately to the local police and your nearest embassy or consulate. U.S. citizens may refer to the Department of State's pamphlet, *A Safe Trip Abroad,* for ways to promote a more trouble-free journey. The pamphlet is available by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, or via the Internet at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html.

Safety can be a concern for women exploring the world on their own, although the macho attitudes of the Franco era are far less prevalent. Avoid deserted streets and do not hitchhike. Dress conservatively, especially in remote towns. A woman in a microbikini parading down the street (common in Torremolinos) will inevitably draw attention from men. Some solo women travelers carry an alarm whistle on a key chain. If you're a victim of catcalls and vulgar suggestions, look straight ahead and just keep walking. If followed, seek out the nearest police officer.

Senior Travel Major discounts are available to seniors in Spain, including reduced rates on most admissions, and reduced fares on public conveyances. Special room rates are also available at the national *parador* network.

Smoking In 2006, Spain banned smoking in the workplace, and on January 1, 2011, included restaurants, bars, and nightclubs in the ban. Smoking is also banned on public transportation and in other areas such as cultural centers.

Taxes The internal sales tax (known in Spain as IVA) ranges from 8% to 33%, depending on the commodity being sold. Food, wine, and basic necessities are taxed at 8%; most goods and services (including car rentals), at 18%; luxury items (jewelry, all tobacco, imported liquors), at 33%; and hotels, at 8%.

If you are not a European Union resident and make purchases in a single transaction worth more than 90€, you can get a tax refund. To get this refund, you must complete three copies of a form that the store will give you, detailing the nature of your purchase and its value. Citizens of non-E.U. countries show the purchase and file the form with Customs when leaving the E.U. The shop is supposed to refund the amount due you. Inquire at the time of purchase how they will do so and discuss in what currency your refund will arrive.

Telephones **To call Spain:**

1. Dial the international access code: **011** from the U.S.; 00 from the U.K., Ireland, or New Zealand; or 0011 from Australia.
2. Dial the country code **34.**
3. Dial the city code, and then the number.

To make international calls from Spain, first dial 00 and then the country code (U.S. or Canada 1, U.K. 44, Ireland 353, Australia 61, New Zealand 64). Next dial the area code and number. For example, if you wanted to call the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., you would dial 00-1-202-588-7800.

For directory assistance: Dial ☎ **1003** in Spain.

For operator assistance: If you need operator assistance in making an international call, dial ☎ **025.**

Toll-free numbers: Numbers beginning with **900** in Spain are toll-free, but calling an 800 number in the States from Spain is not toll-free. In fact, it costs the same as an overseas call.

In Spain, many smaller establishments, especially bars, discos, and a few informal restaurants, don't have phones. Furthermore, many summer-only bars and discos secure a phone only for the season, and then get a new number the next season. Many attractions, such as small churches or even minor museums, have no staff to receive inquiries from the public.

In 1998, all telephone numbers in Spain changed to a nine-digit system instead of the six- or seven-digit system used previously. Each number is now preceded by its provincial code for local, national, and international calls. For example, when calling Madrid from Madrid or from another province within Spain, telephone customers must dial ☎ **91-482-85-80.** More information is available on the Telefónica website (www.telefonica.es).

Time Spain is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time in the United States. Daylight saving time is in effect from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in September.

Tipping Don't over tip. The government requires that restaurant and hotel bills include their service charges—usually 15% of the bill. However, that doesn't mean you should skip out of a place without dispensing an extra euro or two. Some guidelines:

Your **hotel porter** should get 1€ per bag. **Chambermaids** should be given 1€ per day, more if you're generous. Tip **doormen** 1€ for assisting with baggage and 1€ for calling a cab. Tipping a **concierge** depends on how much you have used his or her services. For example, some visitors never ask for anything from a concierge. In that case, you can tip nothing. Sometimes a concierge will submit a bill for services rendered, including making restaurant reservations, arranging a bus tour, or securing theater tickets. In that case, you can pay the bill and check out.

Should a concierge not submit a bill, and you have used his services only a couple of times, 5€ is a sufficient tip in most deluxe and first-class hotels. If you've used concierge services a lot, 20€ would be an appropriate tip. In less expensive hotels, you generally tip much less, perhaps 1€ or 2€ for some minor service rendered.

For **cabdrivers,** add about 10% to the fare as shown on the meter. At airports, such as Barajas in Madrid and major terminals, the **porter** who handles your luggage will present you with a fixed-charge bill.

Service is included in restaurant bills. But it is the custom to tip extra—in fact, the **waiter** will expect a tip. That tip is left at your discretion. Some Spanish diners leave nothing if the service was outright bad. Other, more generous diners tip as much as 5% to 10% if the service was good.

Barbers and **hairdressers** expect a 10% to 15% tip. **Tour guides** expect 2€, although a tip is not mandatory. Theater and bullfight **ushers** get from 1€.

Toilets In Spain they're called *aseos, servicios,* or *lavabos* and are labeled *caballeros* for men and *damas* or *señoras* for women. If you can't find any, go into a bar, but you should order something.

VAT See "Taxes," p. 763.

Visas For visits of less than 3 months, visas are not needed for citizens of the U.S., Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K. For information on obtaining a visa, see your consulate or embassy.

Visitor Information The Tourist Office of Spain's official website can be found at **www.spain.info**. You can obtain information from any of the following tourist offices.

In Canada: 2 Bloor St. W., Ste. 3402, Toronto, ON M4W 3E2 (✆ **416/961-3131;** fax 416/961-1992).

In the U.S.: 666 Fifth Ave., 35th Floor, New York, NY 10103 (✆ **212/265-8822;** fax 212/265-8864); 845 N. Michigan Ave., Ste. 915E, Chicago, IL 60611 (✆ **312/642-1992;** fax 312/642-9817); 8383 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 960, Beverly Hills, CA 90211 (✆ **323/658-7195;** fax 323/658-1061); 1395 Brickell Ave., Ste. 1130, Miami, FL 33131 (✆ **305/358-1992;** fax 305/358-8223).

In the U.K.: 79 New Cavendish St., 2nd Floor, London W1W 6XB (✆ **0870/850-6599;** fax 207/3172048).

Water See "Health," p. 757.

Websites For general info, check out **www.spain.info**, the official page of the Tourist Office of Spain; **www.red2000.com**; or **www.cyberspain.com**. You'll find more details at **www.softguides.com**. If you're interested in the cultural treasures, go to **www.mcu.es**.

Wi-Fi See "Internet & Wi-Fi," p. 758.

TOURS

Spain is one of the best destinations in Europe for enjoying the outdoors. Lounging on the beach leads the list of activities for most travelers, but there's a lot more to do. Spain's mountains lure thousands of mountaineers and hikers, and fishing and hunting are long-standing Iberian obsessions. The Pyrenees of Catalunya and Aragón, plus the Guadarramas outside Madrid, attract devoted skiers in the winter. Watersports ranging from sailing to windsurfing are prime summer attractions.

In addition to sports and adventures, we detail some of the best educational and cultural programs below.

Note: The information is presented only as a preview, which you'll want to follow with your own investigation tailored to your own interests.

Academic Trips & Language Classes

The intensive language courses at **Spanish Abroad** are designed to enable you to speak Spanish as soon as possible. Native Spanish teachers with university degrees are the teachers. For more information about these programs, contact **Spanish Abroad,** 3219 E. Camelback Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85018 (www.spanishabroad.com; ✆ **888/722-7623** or 602/778-6791).

Operating in such cities as Granada, Madrid, Barcelona, and Sevilla, **Enforex,** Alberto Aguilera 26, 28015 Madrid (www.enforex.com; ✆ **91-594-37-76**), offers 20 Spanish-language programs. Sessions last from 1 week to as long as a full year.

With branches in such easterly cities as Barcelona and Valencia, **Eurocentres** is one of the best language schools in Spain, suitable for beginning or advanced students. The most up-to-date computer learning programs and the best video and audio equipment are used. For additional information, contact them at 56 Eccleston Sq., London SW1V 1PH (www.eurocentres.com; ✆ **866/869-3520** in the U.S.).

Adventure & Wellness Trips

The best name in adventure travel in Spain is **GoAbroad,** which is the source for international education and alternative travel databases. This is the site for learning about special offerings in Spain. It also provides websites so you can make contacts on your own. Programs include home stays (you're lodged with a typical family in, say, Madrid or Granada). Or else you might study Spanish within the context of a hiking pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the most beautiful and historic city in northwestern Spain. For more details, contact GoAbroad at 324 E. Oak St., Ft. Collins, CO 80524 (www.goabroad.com; ✆ **720/570-1702**).

Art Tours

Custom tours of Spain that focus on art and architecture can be arranged, especially by **Heritage Tours** (http://htprivatetravel.com; ✆ **800/378-4555** or 212/206-8400). Founded by architect Joel Zack, these tours can be customized and often include guided trips through such art cities as Madrid, Toledo, Granada, Barcelona, and Bilbao. Without airfares, trips begin at around $4,000 for a 10-day jaunt.

Featuring groups ranging in size from 15 to 25 participants, **ACE Cultural Tours** (www.aceculturaltours.co.uk; ✆ **01223/835055**) in Cambridge, England, offers tours led by an art historian to Moorish Spain or a walking tour in Extremadura. Eight-day trips start at 1970€ and include double occupancy in a hotel, round-trip airfare from London, plus breakfast and dinner daily.

Biking Tours

A leading U.S.-based outfitter is **Easy Rider Tours,** P.O. Box 228, Newburyport, MA 01950 (www.easyridertours.com; ✆ **800/488-8332** or 978/463-6955). Their tours average between 48km and 81km (30–50 miles) a day; the most appealing tour follows the route trod by medieval pilgrims on their way to Santiago. The bike tours offered by **Backroads,** 801 Cedar St., Berkeley, CA 94710 (www.backroads.com; ✆ **800/462-2848** or 510/527-1555), take you through Mallorca or from Barcelona to the Pyrenees. One company that specializes in bike tours of Camino de Santiago is **Saranjan Tours,** P.O. Box 22615, Seattle, WA 98122 (www.saranjan.com; ✆ **800/858-9594**).

Bravo Bike, Calle Montera 25–27, E-28013, Madrid (www.bravobike.com; ✆ **91-758-29-45**), is a travel agency featuring organized cycling tours around Madrid. They have branched out to include other parts of Spain as well, notably the route between Salamanca to Santiago de Compostela, and the route of the conquerors in Extremadura. One of the most intriguing bike tours is the *ruta de vino* (the wine route) in La Rioja country.

In England, the **Cyclists' Touring Club,** Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 9JX (www.ctc.org.uk; ✆ **0844/736-8450**), charges 39€ a year for membership; part of the fee covers information and suggested cycling routes through Spain and dozens of other countries.

Escorted General-Interest Tours

Escorted tours are structured group tours, with a group leader. The price usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation.

There are many escorted tour companies to choose from, each offering transportation to and within Spain, prearranged hotel space, and such extras as bilingual tour guides and lectures. Many of these tours to Spain include excursions to Morocco or Portugal.

Although escorted tours require big deposits and predetermine hotels, restaurants, and itineraries, many people derive security and peace of mind from the structure they offer. Escorted tours—whether they're navigated by bus, motorcoach, train, or boat—let travelers sit back and enjoy the trip without having to drive or worry about details. They take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle. They're particularly convenient for people with limited mobility, and they can be a great way to make new friends.

On the downside, you'll have little opportunity for serendipitous interactions with locals. The tours can be jampacked with activities, leaving little room for individual sightseeing, whim, or adventure—plus they often focus on the heavily touristed sites, so you miss out on many a lesser known gem.

A number of companies are beginning to offer preplanned tours for individual travelers rather than groups. Some of the most expensive and luxurious independent tours to Spain's major cities offered by **Abercrombie & Kent** (www.abercrombiekent.com; ✆ **888/611-4711**). Guests stay in fine hotels and are welcomed by knowledgeable local guides.

American Express Vacations (www.americanexpressvacations.com; ✆ **800/335-3342**) is one of the biggest tour operators in the world. Its offerings are comprehensive, and unescorted customized package tours are available, too.

Trafalgar Tours (www.trafalgartours.com; ✆ **866/544-4434**) offers a number of tours of Spain. One of the most popular offerings is a 16-day trip called "The Best of Spain."

Alternative Travel Group Ltd. (www.atg-oxford.co.uk; ✆ **01865/315-678**) is a British firm that organizes walking and cycling vacations, plus wine tours in Spain, Italy, and France. Tours explore the scenic countryside and medieval towns of each country.

Petrabax Tours (www.petrabax.com; ✆ **800/634-1188**) attracts those who prefer to see Spain by train or bus, although fly/drive packages are also offered, featuring stays in *paradores*. A number of city packages are available as well, plus an 8-day trip that tries to capture the essence of Spain, with stops ranging from Madrid to Granada.

Isramworld (www.isram.com; ✆ **800/223-7460**) sells both escorted and package tours to Spain. It can book you on bus tours as well as land and air packages. It offers a Jewish Heritage tour of Spain, as well as deluxe tours by private car. Naturally, this upmarket outfitter uses only Spain's finest hotels.

Food & Wine Trips

Spain Taste offers the best food and wine tours of Spain, 5-day jaunts for groups with as few as two participants or as many as six. These tours are designed for serious gastronomes. The tours take place in Catalunya, north of Barcelona, and include dinners at Michelin-starred restaurants, wine tastings, and cooking lessons with famous chefs. Tours are conducted from March to June and from September to October. For more information, contact Spain Taste, Can Valls de Moagueroles, Fogars de Montclus, 08740 Barcelona (www.spaintaste.com; ✆ **93-847-51-15**).

Established in 2002, **Catacurian** offers 3- to 6-day cooking vacations that include classes in Catalán cuisine. Programs also feature olive-picking sessions and 1-day market visits and cooking classes within Barcelona itself. Catacurian is located in a private boutique hotel in the Priorat region of Catalunya. For more information, contact Catacurian at 1717 5th St. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33704 (www.catacurian.com; ✆ **866/538-3519**).

Golf Tours

In recent decades, thousands of British retirees have settled in Spain, and their presence has sparked the development of dozens of new golf courses. Although the Costa Blanca has become an increasingly popular setting for golf, more than a third of the country's approximately 160 courses lie within its southern tier, a short drive from the Costa del Sol.

Packages that include guaranteed playing time on some of the country's finest courses, as well as airfare and lodging, can be arranged through such firms as **Golf International** (www.golfinternational.com; ✆ **800/833-1389** or 212/986-9176).

What are the two most talked-about golf courses in Spain? The well-established **Valderrama** on the Costa del Sol, a Robert Trent Jones, Sr.–designed course carved out of an oak plantation in the 1980s; and Hyatt's **La Manga Club,** 30385 Los Belones, Cartagena, Murcia (www.lamangaclub.com; ✆ **96-817-50-00**). La Manga is the site of three golf courses, one of which was remodeled by Arnold Palmer. The Ryder Cup, between Spain and the United States, was held in 1997 at Valderrama, Avenida Los Cortijos, 11310 Sotogrande (www.valderrama.com; ✆ **95-679-12-00**), on the western tip of the Costa del Sol, near Gibraltar.

Hiking & Walking Tours

If you're drawn to the idea of combining hiking with stopovers at local inns, contact **Winetrails,** Greenways, Vann Lake, Ockley, Dorking, Surrey RH5 5NT, U.K. (www.winetrails.co.uk; ✆ **01306/712-111**) to determine if any Spanish trips are scheduled.

To venture into the more rugged countryside of Extremadura, Galicia, Andalucía, and the Balearic Islands, contact **Ramblers Holidays,** Lemsford Mill, Welwyn Garden AL8 7TR, U.K. (www.ramblersholidays.co.uk; ✆ **01707/331-133**).

Horseback-Riding Tours

You can take a tour that winds across France and Galicia on your way to the medieval religious shrine at Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. Lodging, the use of a horse, and all necessary equipment are included in the price. For information and reservations, contact **Camino a Caballo,** Calle Urzáiz 91 no. 5–A, Vigo, Spain (www.caminoacaballo.com; ✆ **98-642-59-37**).

A well-known equestrian center that conducts tours of the Alpujarras highlands is **Cabalgar,** Rutas Alternativas, Bubión, Granada (www.ridingandalucia.com; ✆ **95-876-31-35**). The farm is best known for its weekend treks through the scrub-covered hills of southern and central Spain, although longer tours are available.

Sailing Tours

Alventus, an agency based in Sevilla, offers weeklong cruises along the coast of Andalucía and the Algarve. Its three-masted, 13m (43-ft.) sailing yacht departs from the Andalucían port of Huelva. For reservations and information, contact Alventus at Calle Don Alfonso el Sabio 8, 41004 Sevilla (www.alventus.com; ✆ **95-421-00-62**).

In southern Spain, consider a cruise with **Voyages Jules Verne,** 21 Dorset Sq., London NW1 6QG, U.K. (www.vjv.co.uk; ✆ **020/7616-1000**). Its guided vacations venture from Cádiz along the Andalucían coast to the Balearic Islands.

Volunteer & Working Trips

If volunteer work, combined with a vacation experience, is what you're looking for, the best contact is **Plataforma del Voluntariado de España,** Calle Fuentes 10, 28013 Madrid (www.plataformavoluntariado.org; ✆ **90-212-05-12**). This group compiles a listing (and keeps it up-to-date) of all the volunteer programs in Spain, giving you a link to the group that most closely reflects your interests.

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USEFUL TERMS & PHRASES

Most Spaniards are very patient with foreigners who try to speak their language. That said, you might encounter several difficult regional languages and dialects in Spain: In Catalonia, they speak ***Catalán*** (the most widely spoken non-national language in Europe); in the Basque Country, they speak ***Euskera;*** in Galicia, you'll hear ***Gallego.*** However, Castilian Spanish (***Castellano,*** or simply ***Español***) is understood everywhere; for that reason, we've included a list of simple words and phrases in Spanish to help you get by.

BASIC WORDS & PHRASES

English	Spanish	Pronunciation
Good day	Buenos días	***bweh*-nohs *dee*-ahs**
How are you?	¿Cómo está?	***koh*-moh es-*tah***
Very well	Muy bien	***mwee* byehn**
Thank you	Gracias	***grah*-syahs**
You're welcome	De nada	**deh *nah*-dah**
Goodbye	Adiós	**ah-*dyohs***
Please	Por favor	**pohr fah-*vohr***
Yes	Sí	**see**
No	No	**noh**
Excuse me	Perdóneme	**pehr-*doh*-neh-meh**

English	Spanish	Pronunciation
Give me	Déme	**_deh_-meh**
Where is . . . ?	¿Dónde está . . . ?	**_dohn_-deh es-_tah_**
the station	la estación	**lah es-tah-_syohn_**
a hotel	un hotel	**oon oh-_tel_**
a gas station	una gasolinera	**_oo_-nah gah-so-lee-_neh_-rah**
a restaurant	un restaurante	**oon res-tow-_rahn_-teh**
the toilet	el baño	**el _bah_-nyoh**
a good doctor	un buen médico	**oon bwehn _meh_-dee-coh**
the road to . . .	el camino a/hacia . . .	**el cah-_mee_-noh ah/_ah_-syah**
To the right	A la derecha	**ah lah deh-_reh_-chah**
To the left	A la izquierda	**ah lah ees-_kyehr_-dah**
Straight ahead	Derecho	**deh-_reh_-choh**
I would like	Quisiera	**kee-_syeh_-rah**
I want . . .	Quiero . . .	**_kyeh_-roh**
to eat	comer	**ko-_mehr_**
a room	una habitación	**_oo_-nah ah-bee-tah-_syohn_**
Do you have . . . ?	¿Tiene usted . . . ?	**tyeh-neh oo-_sted_**
a book	un libro	**oon _lee_-broh**
a dictionary	un diccionario	**oon deek-syoh-_na_-ryo**
How much is it?	¿Cuánto cuesta?	**_kwahn_-toh _kwehs_-tah**
When?	¿Cuándo?	**_kwahn_-doh**
What?	¿Qué?	**keh**
There is (Is there . . . ?)	(¿)Hay (. . . ?)	**aye**
What is there?	¿Qué hay?	**keh aye**
Yesterday	Ayer	**ah-_yehr_**
Today	Hoy	**oy**
Tomorrow	Mañana	**mah-_nyah_-nah**
Good	Bueno	**_bweh_-noh**
Bad	Malo	**_mah_-loh**
Better (Best)	(Lo) Mejor	**(loh) meh-_hor_**
More	Más	**mahs**
Less	Menos	**_meh_-nohs**
No smoking	Se prohibe fumar	**seh proh-_ee_-beh foo-_mahr_**
Postcard	Tarjeta postal	**tar-_heh_-tah pohs-_tahl_**
Insect repellent	Repelente contra insectos	**reh-peh-_lehn_-teh _cohn_-trah een-_sehk_-tohs**
Do you speak English?	¿Habla usted inglés?	**_ah_-blah oo-_sted_ een-_glehs_**

English	Spanish	Pronunciation
Is there anyone here who speaks English?	¿Hay alguien aquí que hable inglés?	**aye *ahl*-gyehn ah-*kee* keh *ah*-bleh een-*glehs***
I speak a little Spanish.	Hablo un poco de español.	***ah*-bloh oon *poh*-koh deh es-pah-*nyol***
I don't understand Spanish very well.	No (lo) entiendo muy bien el español.	**noh (loh) ehn-*tyehn*-doh mwee byehn el es-pah-*nyol***
The meal is good.	Me gusta la comida.	**meh *goo*-stah lah koh-*mee*-dah**
What time is it?	¿Qué hora es?	**keh *oh*-rah es**
May I see your menu?	¿Puedo ver el menú (la carta)?	***pweh*-do vehr el meh-*noo* (lah *car*-tah)**
The check, please.	La cuenta por favor.	**lah *kwehn*-tah pohr fah-*vohr***
What do I owe you?	¿Cuánto le debo?	***kwahn*-toh leh *deh*-boh**
What did you say? (Colloquial)	¿Mande?	***mahn*-deh**
What did you say? (Formal)	¿Cómo?	***koh*-moh**
Do you accept traveler's checks?	¿Acepta usted cheques de viajero?	**ah-*sehp*-tah oo-*sted* *cheh*-kehs deh byah-*heh*-roh**

NUMBERS

English	Spanish	Pronunciation
1	uno	***oo*-noh**
2	dos	**dohs**
3	tres	**trehs**
4	cuatro	***kwah*-troh**
5	cinco	***seen*-koh**
6	seis	**says**
7	siete	***syeh*-teh**
8	ocho	***oh*-choh**
9	nueve	***nweh*-beh**
10	diez	**dyehs**
11	once	***ohn*-seh**
12	doce	***doh*-seh**
13	trece	***treh*-seh**
14	catorce	**kah-*tohr*-seh**
15	quince	***keen*-seh**
16	dieciséis	**dyeh-see-*says***
17	diecisiete	**dyeh-see-*syeh*-teh**
18	dieciocho	**dyeh-see-*oh*-choh**

English	Spanish	Pronunciation
19	diecinueve	**dyeh-see-*nweh*-beh**
20	veinte	***bayn*-teh**
30	treinta	***trayn*-tah**
40	cuarenta	**kwah-*rehn*-tah**
50	cincuenta	**seen-*kwehn*-tah**
60	sesenta	**seh-*sehn*-tah**
70	setenta	**seh-*tehn*-tah**
80	ochenta	**oh-*chehn*-tah**
90	noventa	**noh-*behn*-tah**
100	cien	***syehn***
200	doscientos	**doh-*syehn*-tohs**
500	quinientos	**kee-*nyehn*-tos**
1,000	mil	**meel**

TRAVEL TERMS

Aduana	Customs
Aeropuerto	Airport
Avenida	Avenue
Avión	Airplane
Aviso	Warning
Bus	Bus
Calle	Street
Cheques de viajeros	Traveler's checks
Correo(s)	Mail, or post office
Dinero	Money
Embajada	Embassy
Embarque	Boarding
Entrada	Entrance
Equipaje	Luggage
Este	East
Frontera	Border
Hospedaje	Inn
Norte	North
Oeste	West
Pasaje	Ticket
Pasaporte	Passport
Puerta de salida	Boarding gate
Salida	Exit
Tarjeta de embarque	Boarding card
Vuelo	Flight

EMERGENCY TERMS

¡Auxilio!	Help!
Ambulancia	Ambulance
Bomberos	Fire brigade
Clínica	Clinic
Emergencia	Emergency
Enfermo/a	Sick
Enfermera	Nurse
Farmacia	Pharmacy
Fuego/Incendio	Fire
Hospital	Hospital
Ladrón	Thief
Peligroso	Dangerous
Policía	Police
Médico	Doctor
¡Váyase!	Go away!

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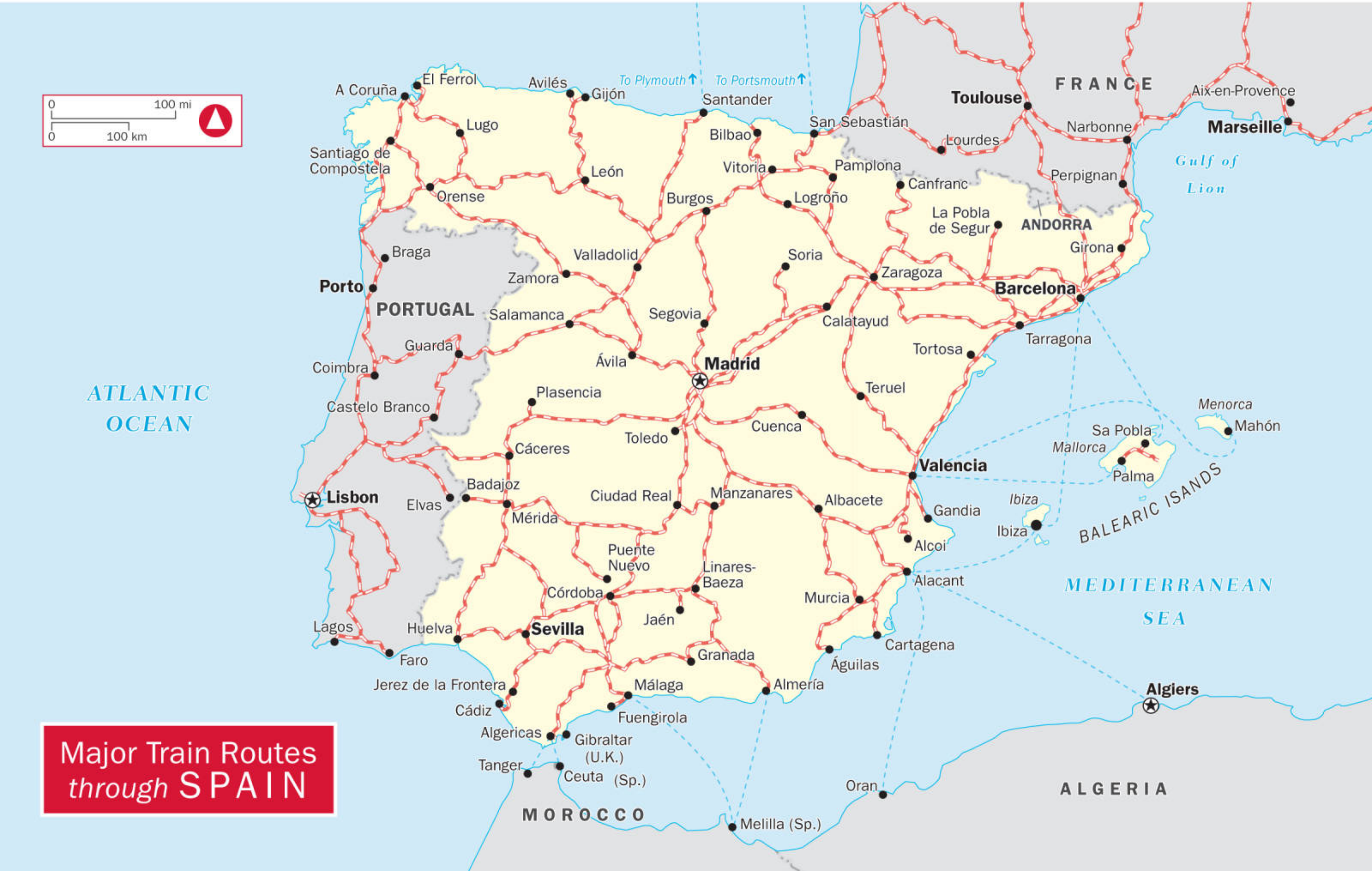
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